EIGHTEEN HUNDRED

AND

FIFTEEN.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN;

A Satirical Novel!

BY

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A MONTH IN TOWN"—"THE GENERAL POST BAG,'
"REJECTED ODES, &c. &c."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN.

PREFATORY CHAPTER,

Which telleth how the Author came to write the subsequent pages.

For some months past I have been anxiously expecting his Majesty's command, signified from that fountain of honor and generosity the Prince Regent, to fill some important and lucrative official appointment, by way of recompence for the piece of historiographic loyalty which I sent forth to the world in the last year under the title of "A MONTH IN TOWN." Every time my street door has been assailed by a fashionable rap — "Zounds," I

have exclaimed — "Mercury is at last come to conduct me to the paradise of power!" Judge then, oh, most considerate reader, how disappointed and chap-fallen looked the flatterer of kings, and emperors, and regents, and such like lustres of this terrestrial globe, when the maid servant (for man servant hath he none, save a half-starved boy to clean his boots and shoes) hath delivered to him, perchance, a letter from some duke or lord spiritual or temporal, couched in something like the following concise but complimentary anomaly of language.—"The Duke of ——'s compliments to Mr. Hedgehog, thinks his "expectations of an important post "perfectly reasonable; but conceives it "very unlikely that they will be realized "until he can persuade the disposers of "places and pensions that his well meant "praise is not *satire in masquerade.*"

At the close of a day of more than ordinary solicitude, when I had absolutely fatigued myself with hope, I sat down to my writing-table, fully determined to address an elaborate epistle to the highest quarter, setting forth the advantages which must result from the appointment of a court historiographer as well as a poet-laureat, and enumerating my own claims and merits; but alas, after commencing and recommencing my letter, some five or six times, an intellectual lethargy suddenly overwhelmed me, my head fell upon my desk, and fancy exerted her utmost power to compensate for the actual disappointments of the day.

Methought I was still sitting at my desk, when a handsome chariot stopped at my door, and in a few moments, a certain illustrious colonel was intro-

duced to me. I had never seen the great man before, curiosity therefore very naturally, for a moment, got the better of good breeding, and I occupied myself for some seconds in taking a survey of the person of one of so much political importance. He was *not six feet* in height; he had *not* the most fascinating countenance in the world; his eyes were *not* full of fire; his nose was *not* aquiline; his hair was *not* auburn; but fancy, which is at best a very capricious elf, painted him exactly the reverse of all these, making him who is in truth a perfect Adonis, and a man who carries the love of mankind, aye, and womankind too, by storm, a most puny, disfigured, and ill-featured mortal, without an ornament of grace. Methought, gentle reader, the great man condescendingly addressed himself to me, stating that the pink of princes had been

touched by my merits, and had resolved to snatch me from a situation of cheerless dependence to one of honourable affluence as a reward for my fidelity and loyalty. He then desired me to accompany him to his carriage, for that he was authorized forthwith to convey me to the palace of his master, the hemisphere of royalty.

Trembling with joy and astonishment, I entered the splendid vehicle, and was speedily conveyed to the elysium of greatness; and here my eyes and my imagination were so completely dazzled by the glare of splendour which burst upon me, that, for a space, I was unable to observe with accuracy the scene with which I was surrounded. Composure, however, soon returned, and I mentally ejaculated, "Can the nation be poor, which yields and supports such

a magnificent establishment?"—Reason gently whispered — "The apoplexy which fills the head is far from communicating nourishment to the members." I stood convinced, and shook my head in silent anguish.

A door was thrown suddenly open, and my guide introduced me to his master, who lolled on a sofa, between two females whose bulk closely approximated to his own. Scarcely was my name announced than the silver tones of the mighty viceroy exclaimed, "Draw near me, Hedgehog, for it is my pleasure to converse with thee."

I obeyed, bowing to the very ground at every step, and stammering out an incoherent acknowledgment of the honourable distinction conferred upon me, when his highness suddenly interrupting

me exclaimed—"Humphrey, they tell me your last was a good thing, pretty complimentary to my taste and invention. Eh, Humphrey?"

"Your highness does me infinite honor," quoth I, bowing again;—"but no words which are within my reach are adequate to the correct description of that taste which has electrified the state." And then, with much diffidence I added—"Truth, great Sir, is uniformly my foundation, and though the edifice be continually tottering, the basis is eternal."

"Always stick to truth, eh, Humphrey?" returned his highness, speaking with great rapidity.—"Never wander a little? never get into fiction? bit of a poet too, Humphrey! Truth is very saucy sometimes. Obliged to clip her

nails, d——d scratch cat; always set my dog FLAW upon her. Flaw cannot bear Truth; and Truth cannot bear Flaw."

"Truth, dread Sir," said I, making another very low bow, as his highness looked at me for an answer,—"Truth, dread Sir, must always respect your highness."

"A little quizzical though, sometimes, Humphrey," returned the prince; "can't always keep her under." "No, no; if it was not for Flaw, I should cut but a sorry figure. He flies at her wherever he sees her, just like a cur at a cat. I like Truth very well when she is good-humoured, and polite, and accommodating, but when she puts on her impertinent airs, and presumes to frown at me, I hate the gipsey. She is no com-

pany for thrones then, Humphrey. No, no, let her away to common life, and trouble not me."

"She should always be well-bred to kings and princes, Sir," said I; "and it has always been my practice to dress her according to the company to which I mean to introduce her. I make her oftentimes a gossip, and now and then a prude, but never a virago. When she is inclined to scratch, great prince, I always tie her hands, and would much sooner slit her tongue, than suffer a word to escape from it which could possibly sound harsh upon an exalted ear. I place her under a most strict diet and regimen; lest being pampered, she should grow proud and saucy, and forget the homage due to her betters. I flagellated her once for insinuating that

a king had committed a foolish action, and—"

"Oh, Humphrey," cried the great man, with evident rapture, "if truth were ever thus kept under rigid restraint, how different would things go! But tell me, Hedgehog, how did your last work go off? Which were the best friends to it—the tallow-chandlers or the public? But they tell me you blab secrets: you don't blab secrets, do you, Humphrey?"

Then methought I laid my hand upon my breast, and bowing to the ground, uttered a great oath against the slanderer who had thus falsely accused me, and solemnly asserting my innocence of the heinous charge laid against me, and declaring that I would much sooner com-

mit rape, seduction, or fornication, than vilely blab a secret: on which his highness was pleased to say he believed me; at the same time very condescendingly intimating that he had none to communicate to me. I was a little mortified at the natural conclusion which immediately suggested itself to me, but I had scarcely made a first effort to digest it, when his highness again broke the thread of my thought.

"I have thought, my good fellow," said he, "of doing something for you, and in a few months I shall carry my generous intentions into effect. But as some of my friends seem to think you are not sincere in your loyalty, I wish you to write something which will please them all. What do you think of the circumstances of this year?"

I saw the drift of his highness, and, without a moment's hesitation, replied, that the year was very full of matter, affording a fine scope for compliment upon royal sagacity, and such like, adding, " Dread sir, consider how brilliant the actions of your brother Ernest will look upon paper, and the tenacity of your illustrious mother, in supporting the dignity of your family—and the wisdom of Calderagh and his colleagues —and the actions of the mighty Duke of Laurels—and of the illustrious men of the continent."

" Enough, enough, Humphrey,' cried the delighted viceroy. " I see it all! I see it all! It is all glorious alike. Get thee home, Humphrey; get thee home, and immediately set thyself to work upon these rich materials. Not a

word of slander—not a single *double entendre:* all sincerity, and politeness, and good humour, and *truth*—no, not all *truth*, Humphrey. There may be a few trifling circumstances to omit, which ill-nature, perhaps, might endeavour to magnify into important offences. For instance, Hedgehog, as little as you please about the sudden illness of Hartsfoot; and not a syllable of any plot against my safety."

"Trust me, trust me, high and mighty sir," quoth I; "trust to the discretion of your loyal Humphrey, who would much sooner cast his pen away, and doom it to ignominious and everlasting silence, than write down a syllable which could be reasonably presumed to reflect upon the great ones of mankind. My homage for sovereigns is only second to my reverence of my Cre-

ator. I hold it blasphemy to profane the one, and treason to speak lightly of the other; the latter to be punished with temporal, the former with spiritual damnation. Since it is the desire of your highness that I should again write an eulogy upon kings, &c. be your illustrious pleasure fulfilled, and be it the highest honor of your servant to obey the commands of the first of men, and truly to reflect the virtues which few can equal."

Methought, as his highness listened to my conclusion, he waved his hand, on which the colonel, my august guide, whispered to me to retire. I bowed, and turned myself round to obey, when a page, enraged at my ignorance in turning my back on the throne, gave me a stroke with his wand, which in a moment dispelled my slumbers.

The *nap* and the *dream* being completely out of the range of common occurrences, I considered as cousins-german to a supernatural inspiration, and determined, accordingly, to obey the call, and digest, without delay, the materials of a new production; and now, gentle reader, do I, with all humility, present it to thee.

CHAP. I.

A family party—An illustrious disorder, and its causes—Domestic bickerings—Unexpected visitor—Vain supplications—Return of an old complaint—Fraternal consolation—Delicate dispute betwixt Narcissus and the deputies of the Fever-isle.

THE year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifteen had nearly attained its meridian; Narcissus, the acting chief of the Fever-isle, during the indisposition of his esteemed father, was sitting with his mother and sisters in a veranda, which commanded a prospect over the extensive valley and park which circled his paternal mansion: it was an hour

after sunset, the music had ceased, which had during the evening serenaded the illustrious groupe, and the pensive aspect which prevailed throughout the face of Nature, had diffused its influence over the minds of those great ones of the earth who surveyed it.

The conversation, which had for some time dwelt upon the situation of the father of Narcissus, naturally ramified into remarks upon the minor branches of the family; and the dowager duchess, at the precise moment chosen for the commencement of this chapter, had just exclaimed, "that hateful letter which yesterday received from Ernest, who since we gave him the estate in Cumberland, is grown so proud and undutiful, that I know not what is to be done with him, has caused me such a severe attack of my old complaint in the kidneys,

Narcissus, that I think it will be the death of me; but I won't agree to his marriage."

Narcissus had wished to feel his mother's pulse on the subject, for Ernest had prevailed upon him to undertake an intercession with the old lady on his behalf; but he had been afraid to commence a theme on which he had already more than once experienced the irritability of his mother's feelings. He determined, however, to put in a word or two, as delicately as he could, to assist his brother. Accordingly he replied, "My dearest mother, perhaps, as Ernest seems to set his heart so much on this union, you will not entirely destroy his hopes by a positive refusal of your approbation. I understand the duchess is young and handsome."

The dowager applied to her snuff-box, and having taken two or three ample pinches, sneezed twice, and then, with as much composure as the shortness of the panic would allow her to assume, returned, "I see you are conspired against my health and my peace. Did I not tell you, Narcissus, that my agitation had produced——but it is no matter. I must be firm, since there is no filial affection in any of you. What if the wench is young and handsome? Handsome is that handsome does; and have you forgot that two husbands she has had already, died very suddenly?—and how do I or you, or Ernest know, what caused their death? Perhaps this thing, perhaps the other; but I won't be put out of my way, nor wheedled into a consent. Lord, Lord, I am in such pain!—Oh!——"

"My dear mother," interrupted Narcissus, "believe your most fond and dutiful son. I would give my life to save you from unnecessary pain; but this attack of your old complaint is a dispensation of Providence; and it was totally beyond the power of your children, dutiful as they are, to prevent it."

"Dispensation of a fiddlestick's end!" cried the duchess. "I tell you it is all brought on by fretting, and you know it. There are but two things in the world which will set me fretting; and they are, *disobedience of children*, and *extravagance*. I can't endure either of them, I can't. Why you know my last attack, which brought me to death's door, was caused by the report, that I had subscribed a prodigal sum for the

support of the *thing-um-bob* hospital, you do."

"I wonder much," said Narcissus to himself, "that the disorder did not make a mortal attack; when my poor father was seized with his illness;" and then audibly expressing himself, he replied, "My dear mother, pray do not let such trifles harass and disturb your superior mind! Remember of what consequence your valuable existence is to your husband, to your children, and to all the people of the island! Why should the idea of Ernest's marriage cause you such serious uneasiness? If he is bent upon it, madam, the wisest conduct for your grace is, to give way to him in this particular, and agree to receive them as your children."

"I won't, Narcissus, and that is my

plain determination," vociferated the old lady; "so never mention the subject to me again. But I hear that you mean to try and get Ernest another addition to his income of some thousands a year. I wonder you are not ashamed to hold him up in his ungrateful opposition to his mother. How much better would it not have looked, if you had made a proposal to add such a sum to mine, knowing as you do, what great expences I have so long had to encounter with."

Narcissus was about to reply, when a noise behind suddenly attracted his attention, and the whole party turning suddenly round, were thunderstruck on seeing Ernest himself in the apartment. The dowager, tossing her head with all the air of insulted dignity, and applying to her snuff-box, whispered angrily in the ear of Narcissus; "this is a plot

amongst you to get the better of my resolution: but it won't do, I assure you. I'll not speak to the unnatural fellow, I am determined."—

In the mean time, Ernest had approached his mother's seat, and had bent his knee before her; while she was still whispering her resolution in the ear of her first-born: as she turned round, her eye filled with glances of unusual fury, it came in collision with the suppliant look of the illustrious offender, who, summoning up courage, almost unintelligibly faultered out—"dearest and best of mothers, I am come to approach your illustrious ear, as the humble advocate of myself and—"

"Don't mention her name to me," cried the enraged Duchess—"don't say a word about the creature. I won't

hear of her; I won't see her; I won't acknowledge her; I won't talk about her; so now you have my determination. Didn't she—didn't she—but I don't want to provoke you, so I won't say any thing about what she did. And you are come, I suppose, to tell me you have married her in spite of my wish to the contrary, and to intrude yourselves into my house."

Duke Ernest felt himself placed in a situation not the most enviable in the world. He looked in his mother's countenance, to see if any beam of maternal kindness glanced from her eye, but all was fury and madness and inveteracy. He cast a sidelong supplicating look at his sisters, but they sat trembling and shaking without once daring to intercede for him, for well they knew mama's rigid notions of duty and affection and family

dignity. Narcissus himself, endued with independent power as he was, returned the asking eloquence of his brother's eyes by a significant shrug, and a gloomy shake of the head. In the mean time, the Duchess violently jerked herself past Ernest, and flouncing into the drawing-room, threw herself into a large elbow-chair, and called her daughters to come in out of the night air; but never did she condescend to make a single remark to her sons; for even Narcissus appeared to have committed an unpardonable offence in daring to advocate the wishes of his brother, and insinuate a single idea which was at variance with the sentiments of the dowager Duchess.

When the first intemperance of feeling had subsided, the writhings and contortions of her countenance sufficiently demonstrated that she was again under

the influence of her disorder. The medical council of the mansion was immediately summoned to her assistance, and Narcissus and Ernest, having staid for some time, to render all the aid in their power, as soon as the duchess was safely lodged in bed, repaired to the mansion of the latter to talk over the disappointments of the day, and to concert measures to reconcile the duchess to the matrimonial scheme which had now been carried to too great lengths to be set aside, a marriage ceremony having already taken place in another country.

"In God's name!" said Ernest, as they were on the road, "is it not a sufficient penalty imposed upon us that we cannot intermarry with any of the beauties of our own land, but even our choice amongst those with whom we are allowed to connect ourselves must be fettered,

and we may not be allowed the most trifling privilege of independence? For my own part, although I should be sorry to have a bad name amongst the Fever-islanders (and here Ernest looked at Narcissus rather mysteriously, but finding that his brother was not disposed to interrupt him, continued) but I will never submit to be dictated to, in this matter, Narcissus—of that I am determined."

"The best plan then, which I can hit on," returned Narcissus, "is for you to get away from the Fever-isle immediately, and bring over your charmer without any delay or notice, and leave it to me to attempt, in the mean time, to conciliate the old lady's temper; and if I find this impracticable, we can even try the experiment of the sudden introduction of the lady herself, and if she possess half

the charms and attractions you have so often described, perhaps the interview may work more miraculous effects than we have any right to anticipate from any exertions of our own. This appears to me to be a plausible plan."

"My dear, dear brother," cried Ernest, seizing the hand of Narcissus, and eagerly pressing it within his own; "you have indeed made me the most happy of men, and I shall be bound eternally to bless your interference. My mother cannot remain refractory, when she sees my charmer, whose qualifications will subdue every heart."

"There is another reason for bringing her hither," said Narcissus—"while we were sitting together this evening, I received a letter informing me, that it will require all my exertions, and all my influ-

ence to get the proposed addition to your income; people cry out strangely about it, and what is a great deal worse, the deputies themselves appear to be tainted with the popular prejudices. One objection is, that you are married and intend to reside in a distant land, and the nation grumbles to give money to be spent amongst strangers. The deputies are most impertinent and unreasonable if they persist in refusing the request; but we must try every manoeuvre to outwit them. You must pretend to concede to the justice of the objection, bring over your wife, get re-married, and the money once gained, you may go and live where you please."

Ernest was highly delighted at the friendship and anxiety of Narcissus on his account; and still more so, when on the morning following, the latter sum-

moned his chief friends and advisers to take their opinions on the best measures which could be adopted to square matters betwixt the Dowager, the deputies, and his brother.

This measure, however, which to Ernest appeared to be an excess of fraternal affection, was, in truth, the effect of a different feeling; for Narcissus, notwithstanding he pretended to bluster and talk in a high strain about the impertinence of the deputies and the like, whenever he found that they were strongly opposed to his views upon any occasion, uniformly found himself compelled to call together all those individuals about him, by whose advice he generally acted, and to take their opinions as to the best mode of reconciling the hostile sentiments; for he could no more go against the determined voice of this body, than

a cork could float against a current of water. In this case, Narcissus considered it dangerous to go too far, merely upon his own opinion: it was therefore with a view to strengthen the ground on which he stood, that he proposed the meeting of his friends, for he thought it extremely probable, that if his mother pertinaciously persevered in her opposition to the marriage of Ernest, that he should have occasion for every assistance to enable him, not only to justify himself in his conduct, but even to carry the purposes which he contemplated into effect. If the wish of Narcissus to increase the income of Ernest, should be frustrated by the opposition of the deputies, it was importantly alarming, since it might lead to a systematic opposition to his will in matters of higher consequence. These considerations and apprehensions had made Narcissus pass

a restless night, so that when his advisers came at the appointed time, neither in mind or body was he so much composed, as to enable him to enter on the business with that vigour of intellect which the discussion seemed so decidedly to require.

CHAP. II.

Some little insight into the characters of a few of the advisers of Narcissus—The council—The progress and issue of their decisions—A coup-de-main, *which is successful—Promptitude; and a rapid expedition.*

The chief friends and advisers of Narcissus were individuals very generally obnoxious to the inhabitants of the Fever-isle, since they had been repeatedly detected in attempting to oppress the community, and by imposing upon it a kind of iron yoke, to make their own power more absolute. They were men who had a good deal to say

for themselves, and generally contrived to keep the major part of the deputies on their side, by suffering them to share in the pickings and plunderings of the public purse. Thus backed, they openly set at defiance the wishes and demands of the great body of the people, and had, at this time, just given two most remarkable proofs of their arrogance. One of their measures was, the passing of a law to prevent food from falling to too low a price, lest the poorer classes of the island should stuff and pamper themselves; as they argued, that indolence was the parent of all mischief; and if men who, by being kept lean were kept industrious, were allowed facilities for fattening themselves, they might, perhaps, indulge in planning the overthrow of the established authorities, and for the sake of plunder, endeavour to excite an insur-

rection. The other obnoxious scheme was, the imposition of a most heavy burden upon those who expressed the juice from the berries which grew in the island; for the purpose of extracting a liquor to exhilarate the spirits: they might eat the berries, and be welcome to devour as many as they pleased; but it was contended, that drinking the juice had a tendency to make men independent and impertinent; and therefore it was sagaciously decreed, that those who kept a stock, should pay heavily for the indulgence.

A long succession of similar measures had produced in the public mind such an antipathy to those who caused them, that attacks had frequently been made upon the houses in which they resided; and even their lives had more than once been placed in imminent danger. The

sudden and successful issue of events, however, had just calmed, for a while, the turbulence of the people, and the great movers of the machine of management had lately been allowed to walk abroad, and to pursue their several avocations, without any material interruption.

These were the personages who now came to advise Narcissus and Ernest on the subject of the marriage of the latter. First of all made his appearance, Viscount Widemouth, a man who had once been respected in a situation which was peculiarly adapted for the line of his talent; but who, afterwards, on being raised to the post of chief adviser of the Duke of Whelps, the father of Narcissus, betrayed such an imbecility of character and conduct, as totally to destroy the good opinion which the public had pre-

viously possessed of him. He was unable to keep his stand on the slippery pinnacle to which he had been elevated, and relapsed into a lower and safer sphere of action, but had recently been entrusted with an office of great honor and confidence. He was what religious fanatics cognominate *a most excellent man*; that is, he went to prayers regularly, and subscribed liberally to support the holders-forth at the various conventicles in the island; he could whine and preach with the most jesuitical sanctity of countenance; would hold up his hands, if he heard an oath, and shut his eyes, if he passed near the corner of a street termed *Vernal gardens*, or whenever he met a fair Cyprian arrayed in all the modesty of nature; but, at the same time, he could associate with Bacchanals, and fornicators, and the like, provided they were powerful

and great, and had the good things of the earth at their disposal; he would *swear* for a *place*, or *lie* for a *pension;* and would fawn upon his master, sanction his dissipation, smile at his follies, and echo his licentiousness, (that is, supposing he was the servant of a master of this description,) could he by no other means retain his confidence, and command his smiles.

After this noble viscount, and while he was still bowing and scraping, with courtier-like humility, entered Mynheer Vansqueak, one who had made a pretty good progress in arithmetic, who knew the *multiplication table* by heart, and had invented a good many improvements, (as he called them,) in the original rule of *practice.* For his knowledge of figures, he was called to the situation of head arithmetician of the island, and in

this capacity, he was always one of the advisers of Narcissus. He was "a crow of the same nest" with Widemouth, and stood much upon a par with the viscount, in point of reverence and esteem. It has been more than once observed of him, that he was a good Methodist preacher spoiled.

While this illustrious pair were still bowing to Narcissus and Ernest, and to each other, Earl Livertaint was announced, who stood at the head of the groupe of advisers, and who was particularly qualified for the post of honor, by long education and experience in the courtly school. He was a man in heart and soul so attached to his situation, that he would encounter any measure of danger or opprobrium, to preserve it. He had, withal, a most exalted opinion of his own talents; and, doubtless, considered himself the most competent to

fulfil the high duties of his office, of any man in the whole island. He could invent pretexts for the accomplishment of any particular object of policy, as readily as the most sanguine conception could imagine; and possessed a face of brass which had never changed colour during a wear of above thirty years, amidst the intense heat of corruption. He made no great shew of religion; and, perhaps, was one of those who looked on this as a subject to be considered when the important concerns of state should devolve into other hands.

Last of all entered, with slow and dignified step, Lord Meldon, who sometimes disputed the precedency with his colleague Livertaint, and perhaps, with some justice, might have claimed the priority; but being somewhat of a diffident man in his manners, the assurance

of his friend and fellow-adviser left him considerably in the lurch. Meldon was a borderer, not very remote from a *Scot*, and had all the northern reservedness in his character. He had a peculiar solemnity of manner, and wore an immense wig, the combined effects of which made very many wander into the error of believing that he was endowed with an extraordinary measure of sagacity. He had also a custom of falling into deep and long reveries, before he could bring himself to reply to the most common-place question; and this again induced those who heard him, to imagine, that the words which dropped from him were uniformly the result of a sound discretion, and a most experienced judgment. He was the most ambitious of the whole, yet, to all appearance, carried an air of the greatest diffidence and modesty.

Such was the groupe of advisers which immediately, at the summons of Narcissus, repaired to his mansion, to pour into his ear their most sage counsels. Many others were expected; but some sent excuses, complaining of sudden fits of gout, rheumatism, or some other disaster, while others were out, in a ramble either in town or country, and could not, possibly, know any thing of the matter, until long after the time when the meeting of the advisers was appointed to take place.

The matter of the discussion was soon laid before the groupe, when Meldon, rising from his seat, most solemnly began—" Marriage is a very honourable estate; it is also a duty which it is incumbent upon all men to fulfil and perform. There are also filial duties, as well as the duty matrimonial, and these

also require to be duly performed. If a man falleth in love with a woman— (*Hear! hear!*)—it becometh him instantly to stand and inquire what manner of woman she be; and whether he shall violate any duties of a prior standing, by taking upon himself the office of a spouse. The struggle is then between affection and duty, and the former generally gets the better of the contest. If the opposition of a parent to the inclination of a son, be reasonable and proper, it is right that it should prevail over passion; but as old people grow peevish, morose, and childish, in their manner, I am not quite clear whether, in that case, law or equity is on their side. The illustrious Ernest has an undoubted right to fall in love; but the law has wisely bounded the sphere of his election as to a wife, lest the dignity of the family should in any way suffer

through the impetuosity of momentary passion. The lady, however, in this instance, is of a rank which would not discredit the family of your highness; and therefore, it does appear to me, that the opposition of the Duchess of Whelps is somewhat unreasonable, and ought not to be permitted to influence the decision of ourselves. It appears clear to me, that, as you, great sir, are the arbiter in the business, in the stead of your father, you will do well to advise your brother to marry her, and then to leave it to time to work the reconciliation."

Livertaint next took up the discussion. "Great sir," said he, addressing himself to Narcissus, "you know by your own melancholy experience what it is to marry according to the wishes of parental authority. D—me, sir, saving your illustrious presence, Duke Ernest cannot

do worse if he marry in direct opposition to parents. It is not the sanction of a father and mother which makes a marriage happy. Every man must consult his own feelings. Duke Ernest is eminently capable of judging for himself; and it is my frank and decided opinion, that he immediately act upon the judgment which nature and education have given to him. Herein I agree with my friend Meldon."

"And I, also," said Widemouth, "agree with my colleagues; for I find nothing in scripture which lays down the indispensability of parental consent to the marriage of a son. If, therefore, there be in this case an union of hearts, it matters not how soon there be also an union of bodies. May the benediction of the Lord rest upon them! "Increase and multiply, and replenish the" conti-

nent: and, in my opinion, Sir, it would be well for some more of your illustrious brothers to take wives, and set about the work of regenerating the world, and not be always meddling with state 'affairs,' and raising political squabbles, and sowing dissensions, where it would better become them to shew examples of concord, unanimity, and fraternal love."

Mynheer Vansqueak agreed precisely in every thing his comrades had uttered, declaring, that although he was not very partial to *division* in families, and *subtraction* from the amount of domestic happiness, yet they could not be avoided, and the *multiplication* of the breed of illustrious personages was too great a *desideratum* to be neglected for any such trifling considerations. He concluded with declaring, that his only difficulty arose out of the stubbornness of the de-

puties, who had plumply refused to increase Duke Ernest's revenue, to enable him to maintain his spouse in that style of splendour which was absolutely necessary to keep up the dignity, not only of the family of Whelps, but of the manor of the Fever-isle itself."

This declaration involved a new discussion. Something must be done to induce the deputies to relax from the rigidity of their resolutions. Duke Ernest swore most audibly, that as to keeping his wife genteely upon his present income, none but a pack of stupid boors could ever think of such a thing. It had been hitherto altogether inadequate to the support of himself; and what was it to do, when saddled with a wife, and one too whose chief inducement to marry him was, her great opinion of the rank and wealth of himself and

his connections. Devil a farthing had she for a fortune; therefore nobody could say he was not disinterested. He declared he was fond of the woman; and between himself and the council, he thought his mother a most unreasonable being, to fret herself into a fit of illness, because he was going to be happy. Truth to tell, he considered himself a very insulted and ill-used man. He had been compelled to run away from the island, because the deputies had got hold of some very strong and very unjust prejudices against him; and now, after he had staid away so long, to let these prejudices get cool, and had taken a wife, to shew his wish to retrieve his character, his mother must start up to forbid him her house, and to call his chosen nick-names; while the deputies, generous enough in things of less consequence, must rise at once, and tell him

positively he may marry, but not a six-pence shall he have to support his wife afterwards. This was the most cruel treatment to a man of his liberal mind, high sense of honour, and unsullied integrity and courage. His mother knew how much he was devoted to his ungrateful country. He was ready to sacrifice existence, to promote her welfare; and notwithstanding all this excess of attachment, when he asked another shilling, what did he receive? Nothing but a bundle of reproaches, a long lecture upon his past misconduct, and such like insolences, which it was neither in his nature nor his disposition to bear with.

Here Duke Ernest, overpowered by extreme sensibility, and the violence of his contending emotions, sank into a chair, and wound up the *melo-drame*

with a flood of tears; while Narcissus endeavoured to soothe him into composure, by assuring him, that he would undertake, with the assistance of time and his advisers, to make the deputies agree to an increased annual allowance to him; and Vansqueak seconded the consolatory assertions of Narcissus, and declared his conviction, that by perseverance, they must ultimately triumph.

Ernest, whose object it was to make "assurance doubly sure," demanded some more unequivocal pledge than a mere promise of eventual success. After, therefore, he had heard the promise reiterated by all the advisers, he put a question bluntly to his brother—Would he, on the faith of the future, advance him a year's income, and enter into a bond to do the same annually, until he had gained his point with the deputies,

and obtained the grant of an increased allowance, according to the legal and customary forms of the country.

Narcissus and his friends were a little staggered by the suddenness of the question, but there was no way to evade it; and after some hesitation, he consented to put his hand to the document; and Livertaint undertook to fetch immediately the amount of the first year's guarantee-money from the public bank, of which he was the principal manager.

Things being thus adjusted, Narcissus and Duke Ernest, in a few moments, found themselves left alone, the council being broke up, and the advisers having left the mansion. Ernest was loud in his gratitude; but his brother was some time before he recovered himself from the surprize caused by the sudden attack

upon his resources. Ernest saw the cause of his chagrin, and exerted himself so effectually to remove it, that by the time Livertaint returned with the needful, they had cracked two bottles of old hock together, and were in good tune. The earl was immediately ordered to broach a third bottle; and about the noon of night, they were all happy in "*the feast of reason, and the flow of soul;*" for reason had certainly surfeited itself with good things, and had fallen into a slumber, while the only soul which flowed predominantly, was the soul of the exhilarating cordial.

The natural effect of these situations is a certain degree of precipitancy of manner rather unusual under different circumstances. So it was now: "D—me, my boy, Ernest," stammered Narcissus, "nothing like doing things off hand.

Go—go—get you off to-night—fetch wifey, and d—me, we'll take old mother by surprize. Nothing like doing things at once—nothing like promptitude.— Eh, Livertaint? D—-n the war in Columbia; always rises, in my gizzard, when I think a word, or say a word either, about promptitude."

"Just so, Sir," said Livertaint. "Your highness is all—all—all—promptitude. D——d hard word—can't get it out of my throat. I like it, though; but it is so very troublesome——"

"Order the carriage and four," interrupted Narcissus. "I'm determined on my plans. Ernest shall go to-night, and I'll give him a we—we—week to come back again."

In five minutes afterwards, Ernest was

on the road to the continent, under the care of a sober valet, and Narcissus was in bed, while Livertaint reeled home, abusing all the watchmen; for it was a full hour before he had ordered his carriage, and he was too independent at this moment, to want any thing in the shape of assistance.

CHAP. III.

The Duke and his valet—Some little account of Duke Ernest, as to his manners and his mind—Conversation en-passant—*A litle digression on the subject of* non-chalance, *and the language of looks—A moment of danger—Escape from peril, and the conclusion of a land journey.*

"SLACKEN my stays," shouted Duke Ernest, as the vehicle rolled rapidly down a steep declivity, about forty miles from the spot whence they had started. It was the first time his grace had opened his lips wide enough to emit an audible tone, since he had been on the road; and the sun had, for upwards of two hours, been casting his splendor

full in the face of the duke, and throwing his gay livery of light round the refreshed landscape; or, in other words, it was about five and forty minutes past five o'clock.

Legrange, which was the name of the valet, instantly understood that which, perhaps, may appear to the unfashionable reader, if such an one should get hold of these pages, totally incomprehensible, and in a few moments gave his master relief, who fetched a deep sigh, wiped his eyes, stretched out his limbs, yawned two or three times, and put his head out of the window.

The duke was somewhat addicted to eccentricity in some of his manners. Always bred up within the warm atmosphere of a court, and beset, as naturally follows, by a whole host of butterfly-

parasites, from the moment when he was enabled to articulate his battledore, he had, nevertheless, maintained in his bosom an uniform love of integrity and courage, and all the other virtues. It is true, slander, which always runs open-mouthed at a great man, whenever he crosses its way, had whispered abroad things not very creditable to his character, but none of the better sort of the tenants believed a word of them. A former valet of his had died by the hand of violence, in a very mysterious manner, in the dead of the night, and, at the same time, the duke himself was most grievously wounded in various parts of the body. It was said that the servant had formed a design to murder his master; and for this purpose, had entered his bed-room, but the latter defended himself so vigorously, that he eluded any mortal blow, and the assassin,

foiled in his attempt, retreated to his bedchamber, and destroyed himself. Many of the Fever-islanders, however, had the audacity to think otherwise, and to accuse the duke himself of having acted not altogether on the defensive. As it has been before stated, however, the tenants of this manor were very much addicted to "lying and slandering, and evil speaking;" and to such an excess was this malignant propensity carried in the present instance, that the duke was compelled to lay hold upon one of the ringleaders in the propagation of the scandal, and to give him up to the law of the island, which always punished audacity with fine and imprisonment.

Duke Ernest was remarkably fond of shewing his person to advantage. He had, accordingly, braced his frame in stays, adorned his face with immense

mustachios and whiskers, gained a considerable addition to his height by appending to the heels of his Hessians an extraordinary multiplication of leather, and looked, from the fierce mirrors of his mind, unutterable majesty. He was a man of no vices, except we must give that harsh name to the little excesses into which the best of human beings will sometimes rush, in despite of the strictest watch which reason and morality can keep. Now and then he drank rather too freely, and in his cups, might be guilty of some extravagancies of conduct; sometimes he was under the influence of momentary paroxysms of feeling, which got the better of the natural moderation of his character: but there was no incontinency in his conduct; he implicitly obeyed the laws of the Fever-isle, setting an example of

strict integrity and subordination to all the tenants whom fate had decreed to fill the meaner interstices in social life.

His grace put his illustrious head out of the window, and after taking a survey of the beautiful landscape which had just expanded from the dark womb of night, drew back again, and exclaimed, "Zounds, what a horrid bore it is to be compelled to watch the sun rising, and the filthy mists of the morning clearing away, from a carriage window!"

And here the duke paused, and fetched a deep sigh, folded his arms, and threw himself back in the vehicle, while Lagrange, who from habit was pretty well acquainted with all his master's whims, sat silent for a few moments, and then imitating his grace's action, he also

looked out at the window, drew in his head, sighed, and fell back most mechanically on his seat.

"It is a d——d bore," reiterated the duke. "I don't see all this occasion for such uncommon expedition: but my brother must have every thing his own way. I am little better than a shuttlecock, and fly whithersoever I am struck. But I won't come back in a week, and that is the truth of it. No, no, I have deeper designs. Zounds! I am half asleep. How far have we travelled?"

"Sir," replied Legrange, "I wonder very much that your grace will suffer yourself to be put out of your way. If I was a person of such distinguished consequence as your grace, I am sure I would not give a snap of my fingers tc

be *snubbed* and *checked*, and plagued, as your grace has been for a long time past. I would go not only *where* I pleased, but *when* I pleased; and I would live as I pleased, and chuse my own place of residence; and, to crown all, I would marry just according to my own inclination, and not to satisfy any father or mother, or brothers or sisters in the universe, not I. And so, please your grace, I would act in such a manner as to shew the world I was a very independent personage, and a very worthy and principal pillar of my father's name and family."

"And now, Mr. Legrange," said the duke, "since you have amused yourself and me with this long catalogue of your actions by anticipation, pray do me the favour to give me a plain direct answer to the question I asked of you,

and keep your *ifs* and your advice close locked in your own brains. Prithee, how far have we travelled? Where are we now?"

"Can't possibly tell your grace," returned Legrange, "for I really have held no communication with a mile-stone since we set out; and as to where we are, your grace, you may as well carry an Otaheitan all the way from his native island, blindfolded, set him in the middle of Pall-Mall, and ask him a question similar to the one your grace has just asked me."

"You grow saucy," returned the duke, looking at Legrange with something like a frown upon his countenance. "Methinks you appear to forget the distance between us!"

Legrange looked confounded for a few moments, and then almost unintelligibly murmured, " Your grace has forgot the attack of the German trooper in the streets of Tzeli, when, if Legrange had not interfered, your grace had been now gone to rest with your illustrious forefathers. After I rescued you, your grace embraced me, and promised I should in future be your brother and your friend. Methinks your grace has a very short memory. Have not I travelled with you through dangers and disgraces enough to appal the most courageous valet in Christendom? And did I ever once shrink from the performance of any one duty you imposed upon me? And yet now you tell me, as it pleases your grace, of the distance which is between us, and check my prating!"

Those who are at all conversant with the manners of the frequenters of courts, will credit the assertion, that remorse and shame are not the natives of such an atmosphere. The high personages which tenant these lofty edifices of human grandeur, consider it a condescension to allow the meanest ones of the earth to toil and labour for them, to expose themselves to danger in their defence, to surrender all their own *tiny* enjoyments, in order to create a mass of pleasure for them, and in all respects to deport themselves as if they were machines which Providence had made for no other purpose than to make these illustrious ones happy. There is also a most desirable air of *non-chalance*, which these potent individuals can assume at will, which is a most enviable qualification, since it speaketh a language which cannot be misunderstood by those

to whom it is addressed, and is also a most admirable pillow of dignity, and the close *avant-courier* of mortification.

If there are some to whom this description is not perfectly comprehensible, would that they had been present when this colloquy took place between Duke Ernest and his most impudent valet; for they might then have received the most apt and ample illustration of its truth. Duke Ernest surveyed Legrange for some minutes, with one of those looks without condescending to make him any kind of reply. At length, however, his grace, with a singular indifference of tone, exclaimed, " If you don't get your whiskers clipped, to correspond with each other, Legrange, d---n me, I'll never allow you the honour of risking your life for me again. I hate to see one whisker like an impervious bush,

while its companion looks thin, meagre, and decaying. Legrange, you must get a new pair; you can never prune these into decency."

As he said this, the duke popped his head out at the window a second time, and began to hum a tune very audibly, when suddenly the horses, whether alarmed at the suddenness of the illustrious voluntary, or whether urged by any rashness of the postilions, who might have listened to the duke, to the neglect of their own professional duties, made a spontaneous and simultaneous dash, and flew like lightning, regardless of rein, of [illegible]; or all the other efforts of the drivers, to the great terror both of them, and of the duke, and of Legrange. His grace mechanically drew his head into the vehicle, to avoid seeing the danger which awaited him, while Legrange,

just as mechanically, popped his head out to see it. This single incident, trifling as it was, serves to show how high the mercury of courage rose in the heart of the valet at the touch of peril, and how low it sank in that of the duke; but perhaps there might have been few illustrious beings who would have displayed any greater heroism on such an occasion; and indeed, if we take into consideration, for a moment, the superior value of such high individuals, their own anxiety for their preservation, as well as that of the people who are about them, may be accounted for on very natural and rational principles.

The duke drew his head into the vehicle, and, at the same moment, Legrange popped his out, and it was all done by one mechanical motion; so that when the duke, who did not observe the

exit of the pericranium of his valet, in a half-stifled tone of terror, ejaculated, "What shall we do, Legrange?" the latter did not hear a syllable of the interjection. The duke did not dare to turn his eyes on the one side of him, or the other; so that he still remained unconscious of the situation of the head of the valet, until the carriage suddenly passed over a huge stone which lay across the road, and the jerk, which amounted to little less than an overthrow, not only brought back Legrange to his original position, on the coach, but drove his head with such violence against that of his master, that neither of the twain, for some time, what with terror, and surprize, and pain, could sufficiently recover himself to make a single observation or expression beyond the latitude of the solitary, but certainly not unexpressive interjection—"Oh!"

But this interjection proved ultimately of singular advantage, since it proved the key which unlocked the granary of language, and the instant it was applied, open flew the doors of speech, and words began to shuffle one another out; if not with very great rapidity, at least with much inclination to make their escape. "Sir—sir—sir," stammered Legrange, "I beg ten thousand pardons of your grace; but it was the carriage—the carriage, Sir, and no fault of mine, your grace."

"D—-n the carriage, and you too," returned the duke, rubbing his head with both hands. "What is to be done," Legrange?—what the devil is to be done? Call out to the fellows to stop the horses, and to let me get out before the danger is increased."

Legrange could scarcely forbear from smiling at the wisdom of his master; but he made no remark upon it, which shewed plainly that he possessed sufficient sagacity for his situation:—No, no, if in the anxiety of his feelings for his own security, he overlooked the possibility of checking the horses in the middle of their mad career, to allow him to make his escape, it was not for his valet to take the liberty to tell his grace that he was under the influence of error.

Before the valet, however, could return any answer, that danger which they had hitherto only dreaded, and of which they had received one pretty unequivocal warning, actually took place:—the carriage swiftly passed over another huge stone, and in a moment lay on its side, upon the verge of a stone quarry, which descended beneath them to the depth of

some thirty or forty feet. The duke could not speak for terror. Legrange himself looked in a terrible state of consternation; and, to add to their fears, the horses continued to kick and struggle most vehemently, so as to bring the vehicle every instant still nearer to the balance. "Save me, Legrange," cried the duke; "save me once more, and I will, indeed, treat you no longer as a valet, but a friend. By heaven, in another moment I shall be far beyond the reach of my wife's affections, or my mother's anger. Save me, Legrange—save me."

Poor Legrange, actuated by a stronger motive than that of saving his master, viz. the wish to rescue himself from a situation of imminent peril, made a bold attempt to extricate himself from the

carriage, in which, with some difficulty, he succeeded, and stood by the side of the vehicle. The postilions had also recovered themselves from the shock they had received in falling, and were now busily employed in cutting the traces, which they could not save, in order to detach the animals from the carriage; and, as they were close at the entrance into a town, any injury which might be done, was of very immaterial consequence, and easy of repair.

The duke, however, was still in a state of alarming peril; but Legrange, after much danger and trouble, succeeded in getting his grace out at the carriage-window, and when he had restored him to a little composure they both set out on foot to the town, leaving the postilions to get the carriage and horses into an upright position, and to follow them to the

same, with all possibility, with the luggage of his grace.

It was an early hour in the morning, when the travellers made their appearance at the door of the inn; and as they were wrapped in *roquelaires*, it was impossible for any one to penetrate their disguise. Here they reposed for six hours, took breakfast, and the duke treated Legrange with a kindness which made the latter suppose his grace was really disposed to fulfil the promise he had made to him on this occasion; and it consequently had the effect of exhilarating the spirits of the valet to a considerable elevation, and in more instances than one, to throw off the distance which usually existed betwixt his master and himself, and to affect something nearer to familiarity.

The postilions soon arrived with the vehicle, which was very little injured; it required about half an hour to replace the shattered traces, and new traces being then procured, the duke and Legrange recommenced their journey with more alacrity than was to be expected, after the scene of peril and alarm they had recently encountered. The sky became unclouded, the sun shed a delightful splendor over every object; even the duke himself, for a time, forgot the moroseness which had lately grown upon him, since he had been engaged in a dispute with his mother, and conversed with his valet in a true and condescending cheerfulness. No accident occurred during the residue of their journey. At the fall of the day, they reached the town to which they had directed their course, where a vessel

was waiting in readiness to take them over to the continent ; and before night, the shores of the Fever-isle had completely vanished from the eyes of the duke and his valet.

CHAP. IV.

A letter from Ernest—A laughing scene—An intrusion—An ill-timed joke, and its consequences—Involuntary harmony—Unpleasant news—A little episode on the subject of care—Narcissus in the dumps, and his chief adviser in disgrace—A partial recovery.

THE time of Narcissus hung very heavy on his hands; there was the same routine of eating and drinking—of women and wine—of ostentatious ribaldry, and splendid vacuity of thought. Duke Ernest had been gone from the Fever-isle about five days, when a letter arrived from his grace to Narcissus.

"An apology for his non-appearance," said Mahony, the confident of Narcissus,

as he handed to him the letter. "The time your highness has assigned him is expired, and he is under orders to remain longer in his present quarters."

Without attending to the exclamation of Mahony, Narcissus had opened the letter, and read aloud as follows:—

"My dear brother,

"The duchess feels herself a little
"piqued at the anger and contempt of
"my mother, and has prevailed on me
"to forego my intention to bring her
"over to the Fever-isle, for the present.
"My mother must be wrought on to
"change her mode of behaviour. Sup-
"pose you endeavour to move her, by a
"promise that we will never come near
"her to offer her the slightest disturbance,
"to give us a letter of introduction to
"the chief domain-holders on the conti-

" nent, by means of which we may tra-
" vel with *eclat* from one place to another.
" If you gain this favor, my wife will
" feel herself easy, and I shall care but
" little about any thing else, the increased
" income excepted. And now, my dear
" Narcissus, for a word or two on other
" matters. My dear duchess has just
" set about reforming me, as she calls it:
" she has insisted upon it, that I should
" throw away my stays, (and that will
" be a plaguy loss to Allen); that I
" should adopt a new *suite* of whiskers,
" and mustachios of a lighter colour
" than those I have been accustomed to
" wear; that I should take off my hat
" to all who bow to me; that I should
" teach her English; that I should be-
" come altogether domestic, and leave
" off swearing, drinking, gaming, and
——ing; and, in short, that I should,
in every respect, grow just the reverse

"of that which I have been accustomed "to appear. I have struggled and re- "sisted as long as I was able: but, as "somebody says in the Bible, 'it is very "hard to kick against the pricks;' and, "taking this into consideration, I have "determined to relinquish the contest. "I have often been complimented by "some of my insolent countrymen, with "the title of a *mere monkey;* but when "I shew myself amongst you again, I "am much mistaken if they will not "find a nearer resemblance between the "*greater Ouran-Outang* and your

"ERNEST."

An immoderate fit of laughter from Narcissus followed the reading of this letter, in which he was joined by his faithful Mahony, who, on every occasion, was the perfect echo of his master. To every *ha! ha! ha!* of Narcissus, the

ready *he! he! he!* of his confident responded; so that when Meldon entered the apartment, unannounced, in the midst of the merriment, although he was little addicted to cracking jokes, he could not avoid whispering, in a tone pretty audible, "I have often heard of mountain echoes skipping from one cliff to another, but this is the first time I ever knew echo amusing herself between two *blocks*." As he concluded, he recollected the folly of the remark in such company, and tried to stifle it with a *hem!*

The *hem*, however, was ineffectual; for although Narcissus lost the substance of the joke, Mahony had, unfortunately for Meldon, caught the cream of it; and being never reluctant to make a little mischief, he immediately put his mouth close to the attentive ear of his

master, and communicated to him every word, not bating a single accent!

The countenance of Narcissus glowed a deep crimson; indignation and surprize struggled for a few seconds to obtain the mastery, till at length, having regained, in some measure, his composure, the great man whispered a word in Mahony's ear, who immediately gliding behind Meldon, stepped quickly to the door, and turning the key, made the poor adviser a prisoner.

"Now, Meldon," said Narcissus, with a smile of triumph on his countenance, "now, my boy, since you have had your joke, I'll have mine. What punishment does the knave deserve, Mahony? Shall we *whip him with nettles*, or *put him in chancery?*"

Now to those who may be unacquainted with the manners and customs of the Fever-islanders, it may be necessary, by way of elucidating these punishments, to state, that *whipping with nettles* was a kind of boyish punishment frequently inflicted by childish tribunals at schools; and that *putting into chancery*, was a phrase very much in vogue amongst a class of men who, either for money, or *con amore*, amused themselves with pummelling each other's bones about by the hour and the minute, a *science* which was very much patronized in the island, and was denominated *pugilism*.

"Heaven forbid! great sir," uttered Meldon, with a deep and hollow groan of anguish; for he well knew what *chancery* was.

"Let us not forget mercy in the heat

of our desire for strict justice," said Mahony; and then again putting his mouth close to his gracious master's ear, which was always open to whispers, he went on—"Suppose we make old sober-sides sing us a song."

"Bravo! bravissimo!" shouted Narcissus. "Thou art the prince of good fellows: We'll have a song, and a merry one, too."

In vain did poor Meldon declare his inability to sing; in vain did he declare that he could not bear singing, and could not even endure to hear an Italian song; that his situation and employment did not allow him to think of *harmony*; and that he could just as soon attempt to pull down the sky with his hands, as to oblige his highness with any thing like a song. He was willing to submit to any

mortification—any penance which it was in his power to perform; he would stand in a corner of the room, with a fool's cap on his head; would stay all day without food, and even go supperless to bed; but, God help him! he could not sing—he knew no words, and as to tunes, he was as little a judge of them, as he was of dogs, or horse-flesh.

But prayers, and sighs, and tears (for Meldon even shed tears,) proved of no avail. Narcissus was determined to have a song; and, as for Mahony, he stood, holding his sides, and enjoying most ecstatically, the confusion of poor Meldon. "Come, come," said Narcissus; "I have an original song in my pocket, and here it is; put what tune you please to it, or sing it to twenty tunes, as you like; but sing you shall, or give up your post about my person;

so make no more excuses, but begin at once."

Meldon saw the impossibility of escape; making, therefore, a virtue of necessity, after two or three dozen *hems*, to clear his voice, and almost as many attempts to pitch it to a passable tune, the chap-fallen and disconsolate adviser took the paper, and sung—

SONG.

I'm neither a quidnunc nor stoic,
Philosophical, sage, nor heroic;
But a son of good humour, and frolic, and glee,
And women and wine are the pleasures for me.

Of religion I know but right little;
For morality care not a tittle:
And when by old Time from this globe I am driv'n,
May Bacchus and Venus escort me to Heaven.

Before Meldon had reached the end of his task, short as it was, the big drops

started on his forehead, and chaced each other rapidly down his cheeks, while his two inveterate tormentors more than ever enjoyed the perplexity into which they had placed their trembling victim; and no sooner had he concluded, than Narcissus declared he would make him sing it over again—a threat which operated on Meldon something like a *tertian ague*, making his very teeth chatter in his head, and his knees knock against each other, from excess of terror. He intreated his master, if he valued his services, to abandon this cruel determination, which would most unquestionably deprive him of the little reason which remained to him; and he concluded, by praying Narcissus to listen to the purport of his visit, which was of some importance, and required serious consideration.

For some time, however, Narcissus persisted in his resolution, until Mahony became the advocate of poor Meldon, and pleaded his cause with such effect, that his master consented to let him escape this time, with no repetition of punishment. "But, my boy," said he, "since you have found a voice, it shall not be for want of practice, if it does not, in time, grow melodious."

The heat and ardour of the joke having now abated, Narcissus began to assume a more staid and solid countenance, and gravely inquired what important business had brought Meldon into his presence so unexpectedly, and at such an unusual hour.

"Sir," replied Meldon, who rapidly recovered himself, as he found his mas-

ter become serious, "I have news from the Rebel realm of some moment. There has been an unfortunate difference between Viscount Calderagh and the Duke of Laurels.

"No more than I expected," replied Narcissus. "Calderagh is an officious puppy, always meddling with what does not concern him, and the duke is too high-spirited to endure his interference; but what is to be done? I cannot part with either of them."

"Your highness mistakes the real cause of the misunderstanding," returned Meldon, bowing most submissively to the ground.

"Mistake the cause! Do I mistake?" asked Narcissus, rather impatiently.

"What other cause can there be? I hope there is no——"

"Pardon me, great sir," interrupted Meldon, "they have quarrelled about—not about military affairs, nor politics, but about——"

"About what?" reiterated Narcissus, most peevishly interrupting Meldon again. "Why can't you go through your tale straight forward?"

"A woman, Sir," returned Meldon. "They have unfortunately got an intrigue in the same house, and with the same person. Laurels caught Calderagh, as he says, poaching upon the manor which he had taken under his protection; so they fell to high words, and then to blows. Laurels drew upon Calderagh,

and Calderagh drew upon Laurels, when the latter gave his antagonist a devil of a wound somewhere about the groin, and a story is obliged to be trumped up of a horse having kicked poor Calderagh, or a carriage run against him, or something to the same purpose, and there he lies."

"Where does he lie?" vociferated Narcissus. "Confound the quarrelsome rascals. Were there not more women than one to be had?"

"Oh yes, dread Sir," replied Meldon, "there were abundance to be had; but both had a fancy to the same tit-bit, and then, Sir, you know, it became a point of honour with them, and each would sooner risk death, than consent to relinquish his right."

"And has the enmity ceased with this explanation?" asked Narcissus, rising, and walking irregularly up and down the room.

"I am sorry to say it has not," answered Meldon; "the enmity seems higher than ever. Laurels swears he will not have any thing to do with affairs, while Calderagh is allowed to dictate and direct. He appears absolutely determined on this point."

Anguish and care, the common tenants of this habitable globe, as oftentimes intrude themselves into the gaudy mansion, and knock at the door of the exalted heart, as into the low-born peasant's cabin. Greatness, it is true, may lose the recollection of unpleasant images in the giddy vortex of dissipation, and

unsanctified revelry; but when the voice of laughter has ceased through the splendid dome—when the gilded cup no longer sparkles with the vivifying and intoxicating wine—when the charms of beauty are no longer before the eye, and the empty praises of the venal parasite sound no more upon the ear, it is then that sly reflection leads care over the ruins which dissipation has made into the unbarricadoed heart, and gives it scope and commission to begin its work of gloomy sorrow; and the more gaiety and folly have revelled, the more considerable are the materials which are left at the disposal of this enemy to illicit pleasures, and the deeper and more durably is he enabled to fix his fangs in the very root of enjoyment, and to riot amidst the scattered wrecks of all the finer feelings of the bosom.

Such was the case, at this moment, with Narcissus. He felt himself standing in a situation of peculiar difficulty and danger; propped, insecurely enough, it is true, by a multitude of pillars, but they were so unsound in their strength, and so dependant on each other, that he feared and trembled lest the removal of one should cause the whole to tumble, and should hurl him, at once, down to the extreme of trouble and dismay. He seldom thought seriously; but when circumstances forced a reflection into his mind, it uniformly brought with it a train of such horrid anticipations, that he wanted the courage to look them boldly in the face, and would, usually, for want of better defences, fly to the bottle, and endeavour to drown the intruders in the repeated bumpers of stupifying cordial, until care and reason together deserted his intellectual mansion.

For some time did Narcissus continue silently to pace up and down the apartment, his bosom agitated by a thousand contending emotions, for it was long before he could make up his mind to any particular mode of conduct which seemed to promise him any effectual relief from the troubles he foresaw. At length in a voice scarcely audible, he exclaimed—" A plague on their quarrels, say I. Must I be sacrificed to their love of intrigue? Did I send them to Rebel realm to hunt out fine women, and then to quarrel with each other about the possession of them. I wish I had better advisers, but I want courage to think and act for myself; and while I depend upon these rotten supporters, I am every day in danger of being tumbled into the mud. I am a most miserable man, in the very midst of all possible pleasures."

Mahony was thunderstruck by this extraordinary soliloquy. It was so rarely that he heard his master reasoning with himself, that he immediately began to augur some important consequences from the phenomenon. He called to mind, that when men begin to think, it is the first step towards a reformation, and a reformation was by no means a desirable object with him, since it was possible that a change might take place, that might sweep away all the real pickings which lay at his command.

Meldon was not a jot better pleased: he did not at all relish the apparent mystery which lurked in the language of Narcissus. He hated the idea of change, as he hated the devil;—and most sincerely did he, at the moment, vent a thousand secret curses against the Duke

of Laurels and Calderagh for not being better politicians than to let their love of intrigue get the better of their reason, or at least for allowing the real cause and consequences of their dispute to get wind, and reach the ears of Narcissus. What might be the result of this imprudence to himself and his fellow-advisers, he almost dreaded to anticipate; but, at any rate, the only plan which appeared feasible, for the moment, was to attempt to avert the anger of Narcissus from himself more particularly. He accordingly summoned up resolution, and, advancing towards his master, exclaimed, "Great Sir, leave them to settle their differences between themselves. Why should your highness interfere? A few days, and the heat of their feelings may have subsided, and, in the mean time, you can recal Cal-

deragh, and reprimand him for his rashness?"

"Begone from my sight," exclaimed Narcissus, in a tone of vehemence—"You none of you care for my peace; you have hoodwinked me too long; leave me directly, and when I have determined how to act, I will send for you."

The manner of Narcissus would not brook delay; Meldon bowed silently, and, with his eyes full of tears, and his bosom overcharged with grief, took his leave, and sorrowfully retraced his way to his own house to tell the sad tidings to his wife.

In the mean time, Mahony ventured to speak such effectual consolation to

his master, as, in the course of a few minutes, to restore him to good humour with himself, and consequently with every other individual.

CHAP. V.

A visit to the Duchess and a new character in this history, although not new in real life—Domestic jarring—Successful issue of the visit of Narcissus—Filial intrusion and disobedience—Some insight into a near connection of Narcissus.

The Duchess of Whelps had pretty well recovered from her last violent attack, and was engaged in a *tête-à-tête* with her grand-daughter, Lady Charlotte Cambray, when Narcissus arrived to communicate the contents of the letter he had received from his brother Ernest. It was the first time, since the day he had been witness to her agitation

on the entrance of her undutiful son, that he had found leisure to make his personal inquiries after his mother; and, had not business required his appearance to-day, it is far from impossible that the visit might have been procrastinated to a still more distant period, for Narcissus was by no means extremely attached to the company of his mother, as the embers of an old disunion between them, were still unquenched in his bosom.

It is probable too, that the Duchess herself was aware of the real disposition of Narcissus, or else, she shrewdly suspected the nature of his errand, for no sooner did he make his appearance, than, instead of greeting him with a smile of welcome, which however insincere and disingenuous it might be in its nature, the courtesy of high life demanded, she

assumed a serious, not to say a frowning countenance, as she exclaimed—" You have taken long enough, Sir, to determine upon the propriety of paying your mother a visit during her indisposition; and pray to what circumstance, after all, must I ascribe the honour of this visit?"

Narcissus was not discomposed by trifles: assuming, therefore, an air of perfect *non chalance*, he promptly replied, " The honor and pleasure, Madam, are exclusively my own, and believe me, nothing but urgency of public business, could have prevented me from paying my respects earlier where duty as well as inclination so powerfully required my attention."

" Papa grows more polite than ever," exclaimed Lady Charlotte, without raising her eyes from the paper on which

she was making the copy of a sketch— "and grandmama, I think, grows more cross than she used to be. Heigho, for a husband!"

"Hold your tongue, saucebox," cried the duchess. "Who told you, Madam Minx, to interfere? I find, after all the pains I have taken with you for the last several months, I am likely to make but very little improvement in you. I'll give you up, if I am to have much more trouble, I will, impudence! I'll not be plagued as I have been, with such a termagant grandchild."

"Then, if you won't be plagued with such a termagant grandchild, I shan't be plagued with a sour crusty old grandmother, that's certain," exclaimed Lady Charlotte; and then added with an arch

look, "I wonder which will be the gainer by the change!"

"You'll make me ill again, hussey, you will," vociferated the duchess, while her eyes flashed fury, and her cheeks were red with passion. Narcissus also thought it time to interfere and check the hoydenish impertinence of his daughter, and accordingly he shook his head angrily at Lady Charlotte, and addressed her, "Charlotte—it you value my favour, or if you wish for good treatment in future, I desire you will behave more respectfully to your grandmother. I have no idea of young giddy girls assuming such airs of independence."

"I know you have not, papa," muttered Lady Charlotte, pouting her lips, and playing with her pencil—"I know,

papa, you think we poor women are fit for nothing but to be snubbed and checked, and driven about, and banished just as you men please: I am sure of this, very sure of it indeed, or else, you never would have served my mother as you did. You would not have tried to bring her into disgrace, without any cause; and then, because you could not succeed in your designs, compel her to go away out of the country, and to fly from her child—you would not—"

"Stop your prating, hussey, or I'll take you and lock you up in a dark room for eight and forty hours, I will," interrupted Narcissus.

"Well, and you may do so if you please," cried Lady. Charlotte.—"I dare say I should not be so frightened

to be locked up in a dark room as you would, for I have done nobody any wrong, not I; and I should not be a bit afraid of being visited by any frightful dreams."

"Go out of the room this moment, hussey," vociferated Narcissus, stamping his feet violently on the ground—"Get you gone to your governess, and tell her if she can't teach you to conduct yourself with more propriety, I'll discharge her from my service: of that I am determined."

"And I am determined no governess shall controul me," cried Lady Charlotte—"So, papa, if you think to send any body to govern me, you are very much mistaken; or any body that shall make me cease to talk of my mother, or to tell you how badly you have behaved

to her. And as to going out of the room, I hope you don't think it a punishment to make me leave company which is always snubbing and thwarting me.'

And as she said this, Lady Charlotte, without waiting for a reply, flounced out of the apartment, while the duchess, shaking her head, exclaimed, "That girl is the most determined plague I have. She causes me more uneasiness than even my ungrateful and undutiful son, Ernest."

"By the bye, Madam," returned Narcissus, eagerly seizing the opportunity thus thrown in his way, of introducing the subject of his visit — "I have just received a letter from my brother, which I hope will tend to com-

pose you, and to lessen your uneasiness respecting him."

"Uneasiness about him!" repeated the duchess—"don't think, that I am uneasy about any such a graceless fellow. No, no, the time is gone by when I cared so much about him as to feel uneasiness. But pray, Narcissus,' what is this you have to communicate?"

"Ernest, Madam," returned Narcissus, "penetrated with remorse for his disobedience, but having actually married the object of his wishes, has determined to banish himself entirely from your presence; and he has requested me only to make intercession with you to obtain for him your letters of recommendation to the notice of some of the distinguished families of the

continent, in order that by mingling with some of the gay society which is to be found in the hemisphere of high life, he may render the term of his exile somewhat more tolerable."

This appeal seemed to produce some effect upon the feelings of the duchess. The idea that this disobedient son was about to remain at a distance, and consequently, would no longer harass her with his presence, evidently operated most powerfully in exciting an unusual elevation of spirits. Her countenance once more displayed a contour of serenity, and, lapsing into a profound reverie, for a moment, she soon recovered herself, and exclaimed—"Why, as to that request, if I could be sure he would remain where he is; if I could obtain any security for his not coming near to trouble me, I might be induced to agree to

his request; but you know, Narcissus; you well know there is no trusting him."

"I think, Madam, with all becoming deference," returned Narcissus, "that you may give him credit this time. Let me intreat that for your own quiet's sake you will give up to Ernest in this particular. Consider, Madam, the great value of your health!—Consider—"

"Have you almost done talking secrets, and are you got into good humour?" asked Lady Charlotte, peeping in at the door which she had gently opened without the least noise or disturbance, and interrupting her father in the middle of his most filial and courtly harangue.

"Oh! a plague on that girl!" screamed the duchess, starting from her seat,

and then throwing herself again most theatrically upon the couch—"I am sure she will be the death of me. Was ever such breeding? Was ever such conduct? Did you ever see such a breach of good manners?"

"Never, madam, upon my honour, never!" replied Narcissus — "I am ashamed of the untutored, impertinent hussey, I am. And I am determined to inflict some punishment, which shall impress upon her memory a lesson of good manners worthy to be remembered."

"Thank you, papa," cried Lady Charlotte, making her way into the room, advancing to the front of Narcissus, and dropping him a low curtsey, "I am much obliged to you indeed, but I have lessons of good breeding

dunned in my ears from morning to night by my old governess. I have told the old creature, however, that I will not be plagued so, and that if she persists in boring me, I never will have any more to say to her."

"They have been dunned to very little purpose I fear," replied Narcissus; "but I must adopt a different course, or I perceive that in a short time, you will lose all respect not only for me., but for your grandmother, and for all your friendly advisers who are careful of your happiness. I must teach you differently, however: so prepare yourself, madam, to go back with me to my own house, for the experiment."

"What then, I suppose your house is a hospital," answered Lady Charlotte, "and thither I am to be carried

to be cut and flogged for the benefit of all the race of independent daughters, and as a warning to all those who shall presume to think and speak for themselves. But I thank you, my dear papa, and if you please, I would rather stay here with my grandmother, than go to be made any experiment of."

Narcissus was but little used to contradiction; and the moment he heard his daughter endeavouring to oppose his intention, all his prudence and forbearance instantly took flight, and he made two or three rapid strides towards Lady Charlotte, as if with an intention to enforce his menace. Lady Charlotte started back, and gazing on her father intently for a moment, hastily ejaculated, "Ah!" and with a scream and a bound was out of the apartment and the mansion in a few seconds; and before Nar-

cissus was half recovered from his surprize at her unexpected and stubborn manner, he perceived her through the window, hastily tripping into the thickest part of the forest, unattended and almost uncovered, followed by a little favourite kid which she had reared, and which was the constant companion of her walks.

Anger and surprize for some time got the better of the reason of Narcissus when he thus saw himself slighted and made of no account. "The gypsey!" said he, as soon as he recovered sufficient composure to speak—"See how little she heeds her father's wishes. Had her mother dropped but a single hint of her wishes, it had been ample enough to command instant attention; but I—I—am abused and disobeyed."

“ ’Tis all your own fault,” replied the duchess—“ You have taught the girl to think too much of herself. You have spoiled her in her education, and you will have to endure the consequences of your mismanagement. But leave her to me this time, and you shall see, when you visit her again, that I have found out the secret how to make her a more obedient daughter.”

Narcissus was glad of the pretext to get away, without seeing Lady Charlotte again; for truth to tell, he had had so many disputes with her on the subject of her mother, and she had so uniformly come out of the contest with an air of triumph, that he began to despair of making any thing of her, by his own unassisted efforts. But the reader may ask, who was her mother?

Gentle reader! The story may be obtained at full length, on reference to the "Month in Town;" but as thou mayest never have perused that epitome of illustrious transactions, it shall again be told, but with a degree of brevity which shall make it less unpalatable than long delineations and descriptions. Know then, that Narcissus, after spending the commencement of his manhood, in ranging about amongst the flowers of beauty, to oblige his friends and to accommodate himself to the wishes of the Fever islanders, had married a lady from a distant manor, but who was one of his father's kindred. She was gifted with all those qualifications which are necessary to the happiness of man: she was young, comely, affectionate, and sanguine; and for a while she succeeded tolerably well in giving satisfaction to

her husband. But he had been too much accustomed to variety, and constancy had no attractions for him. Soon after the birth of Lady Charlotte, he took a dislike to his wife, which soon grew to such a pitch, that he made every endeavour to traduce her fair fame, and to destroy her reputation in the estimation of the tenants, who were all devoted to her interests. Every scheme was tried to render this plot against her character effectual: she was accused of crimes which, when brought to proof, vanished like mists before the sun: her father-in-law stood up in her behalf, and declared his perfect conviction of her innocence; the tenants were equally satisfied of her purity; but Narcissus closed his ear against the voice of truth and equity, for he hated her, and had sworn to persecute her to the uttermost. He now treated her with contempt, violated

the common principles of politeness in his necessary transactions with her, and ultimately, by his uniform cruelty, succeeded in driving her away from the Fever-isle; and she was now wandering a forlorn fugitive, in distant countries, far from the child of her affection, from the husband who had sworn to love and cherish her, and from all the dearest ties, and nearest sympathies of life.

Such is the exile's tale. If there be a bosom so callous to every benevolent feeling, that it beats not with sensibility on hearing her sufferings; if there be an eye in human nature which refuses the tribute of a tear to her sorrows, let the misanthrope envy their stoicism: the philanthropist's sorrow will be excited at the contemplation of an unsusceptibility which would be far from exalting the character of man!

Narcissus eagerly availed himself of the excuse offered by his mother, for his non-procrastination of his visit, and immediately returned to his own residence, to communicate to his brother the result of the application to the duchess in his favour; and scarcely had he been two hours at home, before a footman arrived with the letter of introduction for which he had just been making his application. The epistle was unsealed, and Narcissus, opening it with some small share of curious anxiety, read as follows:—

"To all lords and ladies of manors, "all rulers of stewardships, bailiwicks, "electorates, and domains, hereditary "or elective, leasehold, copyhold, or "freehold, wheresoever lying, and in "whomsoever vested, the Duchess of "Whelps sendeth greeting.—These pre-

CHAP. VI.



A peep into domestic life, shewing how a Duke and Duchess may amuse themselves at home—An intrusion—A Duke not always a hero—An unexpected substitute, and female heroism—its consequences.



In the mean time, Duke Ernest, in the company of his wife, had gradually lost all the unpleasant images of an angry mother, a disappointed family, and the like, and was rapidly advancing towards the character of a domestic man. His voyage from the Fever-isle to the residence of his spouse, had been most propitious; the very winds of Heaven appeared to respect his worth.

and would not "visit his face too roughly." In passing through a forest on the borders of Handover, they were attacked by two ferocious fellows, the advanced guard of a band of midnight plunderers; but by a lucky aim, Legrange had brought the foremost villain to the ground, and the other, on seeing the fate of his companion, instantly clapped spurs to his steed, and was out of sight in a moment. With this single exception, the residue of the journey passed most delightfully; and Duke Ernest, in two days and a half from his taking leave of his brother Narcissus, encircled his lovely Duchess in his arms.

"Well," said the Duchess, in rather a careless tone, after the first endearing enquiries had passed away; "Well, my dear Ernest, and pray what had the Duchess to say for herself? Do tell me

directly, for indeed I am all dying with impatience. You must change these odious whiskers."

"The Duchess, my love," returned Duke Ernest—"looked plaguy blue at me, and stormed a great deal, and fretted with so much violence as to bring on a very serious fit of illness, and then she refused to say a word to me, or to hear a word from me, and then, my dear, we parted."

"Parted! Parted!" ejaculated the Duchess. "What without making any communication to her on the subject of your visit? You are deceiving me."

"No, my love, never," answered Duke Ernest. "What the devil was the use of my persisting in using your name, when she shut her ears, and posi-

tively swore that she would not hear one syllable on the subject. Finding this to be the case, I determined to make a virtue of necessity, and to praise myself for the excellence of my choice, and you for your attractions, when off she went into a *tantrum*, which brought on a fit of her old disorder."

"Mercy on me, Ernest," exclaimed the Duchess—"Why what a fuss the old woman makes about the business! Yet surely I am of the same flesh and blood as herself, and I fancy not very distant in kin from her. And did not she at last consent to receive me as her daughter-in-law?"

"Receive you, my love? Why Lord bless you," replied Ernest, "she won't hear of such a thing: so all that I can do is to manage to gain that by a stratagem,

which she will not concede to affection. I mean to write to Narcissus to gain her sanction and letter of introduction to the gay and fashionable circles round the various domains of the continent, and that once gained, we will visit the old Dowager in spite of her teeth."

"I cannot help thinking how the old lady will frown and rage," replied the duchess. "Methinks I see her, taking a pinch of snuff with all the composure imaginable, when you and I suddenly bolt into the room. 'My dear mother,' methinks you say, 'receive your children to your arms, and let all past anger be forgotten.' 'Get out of my sight, you disobedient wretch,' says she; 'get away from me, for I hate the very sight of you; and as for you, madam, who have dared to marry my son without my consent, I'll have nothing to say to you.'

And then, Ernest, according to the common custom upon these occasions, I'll bend one knee, and beseech her to relent, and you will join me; and then the old lady will fume more and more, and vow, and protest, and swear, and refuse, and finally tell us we grow impertinent, and—*he! he! he!* Tell me Ernest, how do you like my picture?"

"*He! he! he!*" echoed Ernest. "It is capitally drawn, my charmer; and if you can laugh at it so heartily, why, d——n me, my love, so can I."

At this period of the *tête-à-tête*, General Zintzcherdizoff was announced, and almost immediately followed the servant into the apartment, trembling from head to foot, like a leaf shaken in the wind, and perspiring from top to

toe, with scarcely the ability left him to utter a single syllable.

The duke and duchess were not a little alarmed at the agitated appearance of the general, who was not wont to be discomposed by trifles; and Ernest, indeed, was so paralyzed with terror, as to be utterly unable to ask the meaning of the phenomenon. The duchess, however, who possessed a greater share of fortitude and presence of mind, in a few moments recovered herself sufficiently to exclaim, "What, in God's name, has happened, general?"

"Oh madam! madam!" stammered the general, "the streets of the town are in a complete uproar; the Whiskerandoes have offended the inhabitants, and I left the latter pelting the former,

and the former threatening to fire upon the latter; but I begged them to suspend their fury, till I should get your highness to put yourself at the head of your guard, and hasten to the spot, to quell the symptoms of riot, which look so alarming!"

"Me, me, me!" exclaimed Duke Ernest. "Me put myself!—Where? I am in a bad state of health, and you must excuse me, general. You had better dress yourself in my uniform, and you will very well pass for me, in the hurry, danger, and confusion of the moment."

"Cowardly fellow!" cried the duchess. "Up quickly, if you would deserve the name of soldier, and shake off this disgraceful fit of apprehension."

At this moment a loud shouting was heard in the streets; followed speedily by a fire of musketry, on which the general, forgetful for a moment of the dignity of the person to whom he addressed himself, vociferated, "What, Sir! will your highness sit here, and loiter, while the people are being sacrificed?"

"Better they than me," cried Ernest, almost unintelligibly. "Better a few be slain, than for me to venture while the danger is so great."

He had scarcely spoke these words, before the duchess left her apartment in a violent paroxysm of anger, while General Zintzcherdizoff in vain endeavoured to instil something like courage into the bosom of the duke, who still sat trembling and shaking, in his seat. Some

persons there may be who would call this cautious behaviour by the name of cowardice, but they leave out of their estimation the quality of the duke. It might have been cowardice in a peasant, whose life is of no value to society—of none beyond the little circle round his cottage fire, and consequently, who has no motive of a more exalted nature to regulate his love of self-security. But in the conduct of the duke, the necessary caution, which he displayed, was to be attributed solely to a proper consideration for the feelings and interests of all about him; he knew full well the immense consequence of his own existence, the untimely rupture of which would have operated to the overthrow of the whole system of the domestic government. It was therefore a duty incumbent upon him to take care of that which was of such universal value. There was no

cowardice in his disposition; and whoever asserts that there was, is guilty of the unpardonable sin of treason against the majesty of rank.

While the general was thus engaged in trying to induce the duke to forget the consideration due to his own safety, which by the way, was performing a most disloyal part, on a sudden, the door of the apartment flew open, and the duchess herself, arrayed in a military uniform, stood before the astonished pair. "I," said she, in a voice of indignant resolution, as she eyed the duke, "I have none of these foolish apprehensions. Since your highness trembles to appear at the head of the regiment, to restore the peace of the town, I am ready to occupy the post of honour and danger in your stead; for I have long ceased to tremble at the idea of death."

Many persons in the situation of the duke, would have felt a sensation of pride and mortification, at this rebuke from a wife; but his highness was above all such feelings. His eyes sparkled with delight, on perceiving that a substitute had so readily stepped forward to undertake the office, who, if she did not do much towards saving his fair fame from the slur of scandal, would, at least, preserve his delicate and illustrious person from the peril which would await it in an endeavour to appease a tumultuous populace, stimulated by a thirst to revenge insults daily offered them, and a licentious soldiery, flushed with triumph, and animated by an unlawful and insatiable desire of plunder, devastation, and oppression.

"My dear duchess," exclaimed Ernest, in a voice of more firmness than

he had assumed since General Zintzcherdizoff had made his appearance—"You really are a prodigy; and I really am at a loss which most to admire, the charms, *naïveté*, or courage of your character. Zintzcherdizoff, assist me to do homage to her exalted merits. Zounds, let my mother say e'en what she will, I would not be without such a wife, no not to be a sovereign of all the land between the zones."

General Zintzcherdizoff, thus called upon, was compelled to say something. Nevertheless he was much puzzled what to say; for, being a consummate courtier, and a wily politician, he would not for worlds utter a single syllable which could be interpreted into disrespect for the duke, or which could by possibility, be perverted into disparagement of his courage. He therefore, being in

much perplexity for a few moments, stood and stroked his immense whiskers with much grace and consideration, and after the performance of this ceremony, which gave him time to collect his scattered thoughts, he half unintelligibly stammered forth—"Your highness is doubly blest; and her highness is also blessed: your highness in having a spouse who is thus instigated by all-powerful affection to risk her life in the defence of your honour and security; and her highness, in the possession of a consort who is actuated by a proper desire to preserve himself for the benefit and delight of mankind."

As the general uttered this harangue, which had cost him no small pains and exertion in the utterance, he made a most profound bow, from which he had but half raised himself to his perpendi-

cular, before his ears were saluted by a reply from the duchess herself, who, in no very soft, nor gentle tones, exclaimed—" 'Tis all false, general; I am not blessed in a husband; for I have picked up one who has no more courage in his composition than my cockatoo, which flies from a fillip of my finger with as much expedition as an untamed lark from the vain fire of a clumsy sportsman. Don't tell me of his care, and his caution, and all the rest of his thingumbobs. I don't understand much of the language of the Fever-isle, but I think I have heard something which comes nearer my ideas of his conduct, and I think it is like cow—cow—cow."

" Your highness is right in the term, but wrong in the application of it," returned the general. " Applied to mean individuals, the word you allude to is

of a very opprobrious nature, but when attached to an illustrious character, it is instantly changed into one of the finest compliments in the language. Your highness will pardon me for presuming to correct you."

"Oh, certainly, General," answered the duchess—"for if it be a compliment, I certainly have very much misunderstood the word; and since it is so, I will no longer persist in applying it to my duke, since he must be most notoriously undeserving of it. Would any man of spirit—would any other man than this duke of mine, suffer his wife, whom he has sworn to defend and protect, to reverse the decree of nature and religion, and to put on the habit of a man, to give to him that very protection she must naturally expect to derive from him? Don't talk to me about his

merit. I say, if he had not spirit to ward off danger from his wife, and to shew himself a man, he had no business to marry me."

During this most interesting colloquy, Duke Ernest had sat hugging himself in his elbow chair, in a corner of the room, without feeling the least discomposure, or any wish at all to interfere in the conversation, not a tittle of which had produced the effect of changing, in any degree, his resolution as to how he should act. He inwardly vowed, that let the duchess scold and rate as much as she would, be would not move out to face the enemy; at the same time he wished not to irritate his spouse; and he considered this a proper period to say a word or two, not by way of justification, or palliation of his apparent pusillanimity, for he considered that it

needed none, but to soothe and conciliate her highness, lest, in the early stage of his marriage character, she might be compelled to withdraw from him some part of her affection. He accordingly hummed very audibly three or four times, and then rising from his chair, advanced towards the indignant partner of his bed, and taking her hand, addressed her—"My love, my life, my better half," said he—"your accomplishments come upon me with such force, that I am utterly unable to stand before them. By the Lord, and that is an oath of much weight and solemnity in my country, I will take you to the Fever-isle, the moment I hear from Narcissus, and compel my obstinate old mother to receive you with open arms, and I am certain she must admire and love you above all creatures in the world."

The duchess answered not a word, but cast a look of sovereign contempt upon her spouse, and extricating her hand with a sudden jerk, which hurled his highness half way across the room, she turned to, General Zintzcherdizoff, and bidding him lead the way, and provide her with a horse, she without further hesitation, followed him into the street, without deigning another glance at her spouse, who stood, thunderstruck on the very spot whither his wife had sent him, without uttering a word.

"The Lord have mercy upon me!" exclaimed the duke to himself, as soon as he was fairly rid of his wife and the general, and had locked himself in the apartment—"The Lord have mercy upon me, what a termagant I have got hold of! My mother, after all, seems to have been a little in the right, when

she was so inveterate against this catch of mine. A few months ago, and I could act and speak as I pleased; there was no person who dared to call me cow—cow—cow—curse the word: it looks ugly if written upon paper; but as somebody says in the play, 'What's honour? Will it heal a wound?' &c. &c. No, no, after all, I am of opinion that safety, solid security, is infinitely better than danger and death. The Lord preserve me from both: I was once very near being brought to my end, when my valet and I—away with the thought, it puts me quite out of humour."

Thus did Duke Ernest soliloquize while the duchess and the general sped their way to the square where the people and the soldiery were looking at each other with looks of unsurpassed imag-

nity. They found that the fire which had alarmed them was merely a discharge of powder, over the heads of the insurgent populace to intimidate them from taking recourse to acts of violence, which they had been continually menacing, and which must have led to the most fatal and extensive consequences.

The duchess rode most gallantly at the head of the town guard, and supported by General Zintzcherdizoff and many other officers, to the scene of the tumult, and with her sword in her hand, commanded the populace to fall back, and instantly advancing betwixt them and the Whiskerandoes, waved her hand to procure silence, and addressed herself to the multitude with such courage and energy of expression, that in a quarter of an hour the whole groupe gave her three hearty cheers and dispersed.

"You have done it nobly, madam," exclaimed the general, taking off his hat, and bowing in token of admiration of her gallant conduct.

"I have acted as it became my rank," said the duchess, guiding her horse back to her residence—"and if the duke had done as much, I should not have had to blush for his misconduct. What a fool was I to unite myself with such a —"

"Careful and illustrious consort," interrupted the general, and before the duchess replied, they had arrived at their destination.

The duke was still locked in his apartment, indulging himself in reveries most pleasing to his fancy, when the duchess assailed the door and his ears at the same time, with repeated blows and an excla-

mation of—" Come, come, my gallant spouse, you may venture to shew your gracious phiz now without any apprehension of consequences. I have dispersed the danger, and have returned without scar, or wound, or terror, to congratulate you on the glorious issue of your gallantry by substitute!"

" Your raillery is equal to your spirit, my dear duchess," said the duke, as he unlocked the door of the apartment—" I am very ready to surrender the palm to you, for you richly deserve it; but come, love, be serious, and let me hear from you the particulars."

" You may learn them from your general," retorted the duchess, haughtily—" while I disarm myself; and when you learn to shew a little of that gallantry which is necessary to uphold a

man, you may hope to gain some portion of that esteem, which your present unworthy pusillanimity and carelessness of my safety, have banished from my bosom."

So saying, she hastily brushed by her spouse, and passed out at the opposite door of the apartment, leaving him to gather consolation for the contempt from the oily and courtier-like tongue of the prudent and politic Zintzcherdizoff.

CHAP. VII.

Some little insight into the character of Lady Charlotte Cambray—The sentiments of the Fever-islanders respecting her—A tribute to the virtues of Narcissus—Jarrings and discords—Pettishness of age, and independence of youth—A letter and a journey.

The Duchess of Whelps had no sooner got rid of Narcissus, than she wrote the epistle introductory, which the latter sent to Duke Ernest, and having finished this task to her own satisfaction, she dispatched a servant in search of Lady Charlotte, whom she resolved to chastise without delay, for the rude disrespect with which she had behaved during the visit of her father.

Lady Charlotte had tripped into the forest, upon her usual morning's ramble, and had made her way to the cottage of a poor, though industrious peasant, whom misfortune had pressed down with its heavy hand; and who had, for some weeks, been a pensioner on her bounty, without which himself and his family would, in all probability, have perished from want.

"Well, Richard," said her ladyship, as she tripped gaily into the cottage, for she had completely forgotten, by this time, all the rebukes of her grandmother and her father. "Well, Richard, and how is your wife this morning? I hope Dr. Feverden sent the medicine to her yesterday, as I ordered him; and I hope your youngest girl is getting the better of her illness."

"May heaven eternally bless your ladyship's charitable heart and hand," said the grateful peasant, almost suffocated by the excess of his feelings; "but for your kind interference, my Mary had by this time been snatched from me, and perhaps my child; and I myself been doomed to wander and ask my bread, perhaps of the hard-hearted and the proud. Your goodness, angelic lady, has snatched me from the fear of this degradation, and we all live to pray for blessings on your head."

When Lady Charlotte discovered this family, the poor man had been thrown from a horse, and had his leg broken; he was lying at an ale-house, by the side of the forest: some person had communicated his situation to her ladyship, and her susceptible breast imme-

diately caught the glow of benevolence, and stimulated her to go in person and ascertain the truth of the narrative. She found his state even more pitiable than description had painted it. There was a cottage uninhabited, in the wood; thither she caused him to be moved, ordered a skilful surgeon to set the fractured limb, sent to the neighbouring town for his wife and family to nurse him, and gave them ample means of support. In a few nights, the poor woman, through excessive fatigue, was taken in premature labour, and must have died but for an uncommon exertion of medical skill; the infant perished, the mother, after a severe struggle, was restored, and the family was again in an improving state of health and happiness.

Lady Charlotte never failed to make

her morning visit to this seat and scene of her benevolence, to give some token of her charity to the grateful residents. Was it to be wondered at, that the Fever-islanders should love this lady? Is it matter of any astonishment, that they should have looked forward with all the eagerness of hope and joy, to the probable time, when, according to the course of nature, and the law of the island, the possession of the manor should devolve upon her? No:—the poor hailed the prospect as the commencement of a political millennium, when trouble and penury should be banished from the estate; and the richer tenants anticipated an age of unlimited enjoyment of glory and prosperity: for none would admit the possibility that the hand which was ever open to the calls of sweet pity, could at any time be extended to oppress or enslave.

These anticipations were built upon the certain conviction that the illustrious Narcissus could not live for ever. "Would it please heaven," the Fever-islanders were unanimously wont to say, "that our Narcissus could be immortal, we would wish no other lord of the manor; but as he must, woe to tell, like all other mortals, die, it is matter of high consolation, that we can look to the prospect of a successor so well worthy to sit upon his seat, to perpetuate his benignant measures, and to extend the glory of his presidency to the instruction, the advantage, the wonder, and the admiration of ages which are yet unborn!"

Lady Charlotte was engaged in the heavenly office of dispensing her benevolence, when one of the pages of the duchess made his appearance, with a

message from his mistress, desiring her ladyship's immediate presence at the castle. The orders of the servant were peremptory, for as soon as he had delivered his errand, he stood, contrary to usual form and custom, waiting for some reply to his message, without being daunted or discomposed by the astonished looks of Lady Charlotte.

"Well, you have delivered your message, and you need not wait," was the reply which her ladyship gave, after some short pause.

"Your ladyship will pardon me," returned the page, "but I am ordered to take your ladyship back to the castle with me."

"To take me back, fellow," retorted Lady Charlotte, darting a look of min-

gled anger and contempt at the trembling servant—"Get you gone to your mistress, and tell her I shall come when I have finished my walk." And saying this, her ladyship turning away from the page, and addressing herself to Richard, asked him "if he would protect her from the persecution of a menial?"

"Protect your ladyship," exclaimed Richard, who was sufficiently recovered to stride vigorously towards the door—"Ay, will I, and to the very last drop of my blood too; and ill luck follow the Fever-islander who would not be proud to lay down his life for you."

The page, who had still remained lurking about her ladyship even after she had given him the rebuke, no sooner heard the menace, and saw the looks and

attitude of the peasant, who had seized his crutch, and was most terrifically brandishing it above his head, than, without waiting for more words, he suddenly turned on his heel, and made a rapid movement towards the castle.

"The scoundrel," said Richard, as he saw the dependant trudging homewards precipitately, "had he stayed squinting round your ladyship three minutes more, I would have tried the strength of my wooden horse across his pericranium; and, for fear the sneaking rascal should again offer to shew your ladyship any molestation, I will see your ladyship all the way to the castle, if it is your pleasure to go that way, and if not, my humble services shall attend your ladyship wherever you may please to walk."

Lady Charlotte felt restored and cheered by the grateful peasant's alacrity and zeal in her service; for although she knew full well that the servant had acted according to the orders of his mistress, and that the utmost efforts of her protector could not avail to rescue her from the anger of the duchess, and whatever consequences might ensue from it, yet she was too gay of heart, and her disposition was too lively and sanguine to allow her to dwell much upon this as a subject of gloom and despondency.

"I thank you, my good friend," returned Lady Charlotte—"for your kind offer, and shall certainly avail myself of it, as I walk to the castle, for I have no wish to endure a repetition of such an insult to my rank, as that which I have just been doomed to receive."

Richard expressed the pleasure he felt in being able to prove his fidelity to her, and her ladyship moved to the castle, followed at a humble distance by her guardian, whose eyes were directed to every part of the forest, in search of any object which might menace the progress of Lady Charlotte, and thus give him the opportunity of signalizing himself in her defence.

They had just turned an angle of the forest, which was somewhat more abrupt than usual, when Richard suddenly espied the very page who had before been lurking about, secreting himself behind a thick oak near which lay the path. Without appearing to notice the spy, as if by accident, he quickened his step, and came within a pace or two of Lady Charlotte, and just as they ar-

rived at the place of the fellow's concealment, Richard made a spring to the spot, and seizing the intruder by the neck, dragged him forth.

Finding himself in the severe gripe of his enemy, the menial dropped upon his knees before Lady Charlotte, and intreated that he might be allowed to escape unpunished, declaring that he had only acted by command of the duchess, to whom he did not dare to return without accomplishing the object of his errand, and taking back with him her ladyship into the presence of his mistress. He vowed, however, if her ladyship would order him to be discharged, that, at all risks and hazards, he would make the best of his way to the castle alone, and would deliver to the duchess any message what-

ever with which her ladyship might chuse to entrust him.

Lady Charlotte felt that to punish the servant for obeying the orders of his mistress, would be most impolitic as well as most unjust; she therefore desired Richard merely to detain him until she had reached the castle, without offering him any violence; and as soon as he was assured that she had safely reached her destination, to give the creature liberty, and leave him to shift for himself as well as he could.

Richard complied, and Lady Charlotte, after receiving the servant's thanks for dealing so leniently with him, and his repeated assurances of future attachment to her person and devotedness to her interests, set forward towards the

castle, where, after a walk of about five minutes, she safely arrived, and was proceeding straight to her apartment, when, in crossing one of the galleries, she was met by the duchess herself.

"So! so! madam!" returned the duchess, the moment she saw Lady Charlotte, "you have returned to the castle at last! Pray come with me to my chamber, for I want to have a little conversation with you on the strangeness of your behaviour, alike discreditable to yourself and me."

Saying this, without allowing Lady Charlotte a moment's time for reply, the duchess laid hold of her by the arm, and led her through the whole suite of apartments which intervened betwixt the gallery and her own, while her ladyship,

without offering the least resistance to the violence, secretly revolved in her mind in what manner it would be most becoming to reply to the interrogatories which she anticipated.

Lady Charlotte, first of all, weighed the situation and rank of the duchess, which placed her so high, according to the statutes and forms of the island, as to render it dangerous for any individual to offer her grace any direct insult. At the same time, thought her ladyship, that the law protects her from receiving injury, ought it not to prevent her from offering it; and if she does offer it, is not such an act a virtual justification of retaliatory measures? Reason answered the question in the affirmative; and added that laws were only to be observed so long as they were in unison with reason and with equity. Besides her ladyship called

to mind her own rank and dignity in the island, which were very conspicuous, and were fenced round with most peculiar enactments, to prevent them from being attacked with impunity. Pride here came to her ladyship's assistance, and brought forward such powerful arguments to prove that she ought to keep up a character of independent dignity, and not tamely to submit to insult, that by the time she had reached the apartments of the duchess, Lady Charlotte had made up her mind not to brook any officious interference with her conduct, not even from her grace herself.

"Now, madam," demanded the duchess, in a most haughty and imperious tone of voice, "inform me how you can justify your disrespectful treatment of your father and me, during his late visit;

and do not think that I shall pass lightly over the affair."

And here the duchess had recourse to her snuff-box, to which she applied with such violence, as to raise a cloud about her, of such strength of odoriferous fragrance, that it was some minutes before Lady Charlotte could cease sneezing, and make an answer:—

"Madam," said her ladyship, as soon as she was a little composed, and summoning all her native dignity to her aid, "I am disposed to pay respect both to your grace and my father, so long as I find I am respected by both; but when you cease to treat me with a proper degree of decorum, it is then that I feel myself absolved from the duty of paying deference, which is no longer warranted."

"Mercy on me, Miss Pert!" cried the duchess, "is this your language to me? Well, then, since you are not to be won to good behaviour by any kindness which I can shew you, I tell you I have your father's authority to use measures of a severer aspect."

"As to kindness, madam," returned Lady Charlotte, "you have not endeavoured to win me by any such means; and if my father has so far forgotten his own dignity and mine, as to menace severer measures, I am determined to resist them."

"You are, madam prateapace, are you?" vociferated the duchess; "you are determined to resist them, eh? And this is the kind of language you think proper to hold with me—with me, the Duchess

of Whelps! Very well, madam, then we'll see—yes, yes, we'll see which will avail most, my menace or your's. I'll lock you up, you ungracious hussey, I'll lock you up—I will--I will."

"Madam," returned Lady Charlotte, "you shall use force to lock me up; and if you do use force, I will do all I can to rouse the Fever-islanders to come to my rescue; for perhaps your grace has forgotten, in the midst of your haste and anger, whom I am."

"You, you, you!" responded the duchess. "You are a saucy little baggage, that is what you are; and as for the Fever-islanders, if they dare to come and shew any of their airs about my castle, it will be bad enough for some of them, I'll warrant: so now, miss, if

you wish to avert my anger, get down upon your knees this very moment, and express your contrition for the past."

"I am little accustomed to express that which I do not feel," said Lady Charlotte, in a resolute tone; "and be assured, madam, if your grace is so ready to forget my dignity, I shall not lose sight of it, nor degrade it, by humbling myself before any person. And now, if your grace has done with me, allow me to request permission to retire to my chamber as soon as may be."

"Your assurance is intolerable," cried the duchess; "but I'll find means to lessen it, and to reduce you to obedience. Get along to your chamber; and mind me, miss, see you do not leave it again until I send for you. However I shall set a person to watch over you,

while I go in search of your father; and let me tell you, miss, that when I return, you may perhaps not find my anger quite so light and so contemptible as you seem to imagine it now. I'll find a way to bring you down, I'll warrant!"

Lady Charlotte stopped to hear the conclusion of the sentence, and then turning round to the duchess, without uttering a word in reply, dropped a most formal curtesy, and immediately made the best of her way to her apartment, determined, without delay, to address a letter to her father; which, although it might produce no kind of alleviation of her situation, would be interesting and important, inasmuch that it would shew to him that she considered herself under the protection of the laws and usages of the manor, and that

she knew her own dignity and importance in the estate, and was determined not silently to allow them to be infringed, nor to endure any thing which she considered an unbecoming insult, without making a formal protest against it.

She accordingly sat herself down to her writing-table, and without much hesitation, penned the following letter to Narcissus.

"Dear father.—If you commissioned "my grandmother to endeavour to use "austere measures with me to make me "humble, and to call her austerity kind-"ness; if you gave her authority to "waive all respect for my character and "rank, and to treat me as unceremoni-"ously as she would one of her waiting "women; if you have desired her to "deprive me, first of my spirit, and then

"of my liberty, you have taken a wrong "method either to make me love you, "or to respect her. I have feelings "which require to be consulted and ac- "commodated as well as she has, and "you have; and I am sure you would "consider me a disgrace to your family "and your name, if you supposed me "so mean as to submit to such arbi- "trary conduct without resistance. "This, be assured, I shall not do. "Whatever harsh steps are taken with "me, they must be carried into execu- "tion by force; and as far as I have the "power, the tenants of the manor shall "be acquainted with all your proceed- "ings, and they shall judge between us, "and I rely confidently on the result.

"CHARLOTTE."

By one of her own pages she dispatched this letter to Richard, with instruc-

tions to him to get it forwarded to her father immediately, and having done this, she felt a degree of satisfaction to which she had before been a stranger, and looked forward to all the possible consequences of the anger of her father and her grandmother, with a composure which was not to be surpassed.

In the mean time, the duchess, provoked almost to madness by the obstinate contradiction of Lady Charlotte, vented her spleen and ill nature upon all her attendants. Waiting women, pages, and footmen alternately felt the effects of her ill-humour, which fell indiscriminately upon all. "Am I," said she to herself—"I who have lived till these years in high rank and consideration to be now treated in this way by a young chit who is not arrived at years of discretion? No, no; I'll take

pretty decisive measures to punish the saucy hussey, and to prevent any such treatment in future, or bye and bye, I shall lose all my dignity and consequence, and be accounted of no more note or weight in the manor, than an old woman who sells her apples at the corners of streets."

Thus did the duchess talk to herself; thus did she fume and fret, for upwards of an hour after Lady Charlotte had left her; and, having worked herself up to a pitch of indignation and fury which mocked all kind of controul, she ordered her principal female attendant to prepare herself to accompany her, and directed a carriage to be got ready with all expedition to convey them to the residence of Narcissus; for the duchess inwardly made a vow not to lie down in her bed until she had concerted with

her son some mode of reducing the termagant spirit of his daughter, and teaching her to behave herself to her betters with that decorum and respect of which she seemed at present practically to know so very little.

CHAP. VIII.

Narcissus in the dumps—Something about conscience, which may or may not be relevant—An hypothesis—Visit of the duchess, and its result—A tour projected—A bit of a secret, and a due proportion of caution.

When the Duchess of Whelps arrived at the manor house, Narcissus was very fortunately alone; and perhaps, what was equally fortunate, his highness was not in the best temper imaginable. He had just been reviewing some little of his past conduct, and this shews that the greatest of men, notwithstanding they are in general so entirely surrounded by

all the pleasures and gaieties of life, have their moments of reflection, when conscience wakes and goads them for the follies or vices of which they have been guilty. Although the illustrious ones of the earth are so high and so puffed up with consequence, that we are told even a cat must not mew at them; yet that little sharp monitor which heaven has implanted in every human breast, pays very little courtesy at the shrine of greatness, but will and does just as soon prick the mightiest as the meanest of the creatures of Providence.

What might have been the exact tenor of the thoughts of Narcissus at this moment we pretend not to assert.—The author only presumes to state the external words and actions of those of whom he writes; his cognizance ex-

tends not to the heart. *Perhaps* Narcissus had been pondering upon his treatment of his innocent wife, of her whom he had beguiled from a foreign shore, and brought into a land of strangers, and then, in violation of his vow and his duty, had deserted her, and doomed her to as much of ignominy as he could heap upon her. *Perhaps* he was calling to mind political promises which he had with as little conscientiousness broken; and of the mischiefs which he had brought upon the Fever-isle, by continuing about his person advisers, who were in general obnoxious to the tenants, because they had been detected in the commission of mal-practices which had a tendency to injure the character and lessen the value of the estate, and whom the deputies of the manor had once pronounced to be very unworthy of the confidence which

Narcissus reposed in them. *Perhaps*—but we will go to more certain matter.

No sooner had the duchess entered the room than she threw herself down upon a sofa, and taking out her snuff-box, began most plentifully to regale her nose, not omitting to bespatter her costly garments with a due portion of the pulverized essence, and this to Narcissus was as plain an indication of something wrong, as if he had heard her orally declare that it was so; he accordingly stroked his face out into a more than ordinary length, sighed very deeply and then gradually approached the duchess, and when he had advanced within half a pace of the sofa, according to due form of filial politeness, he offered to take her hand.

The duchess, however, snatched away

her hand the moment it came in contact with that of Narcissus, and very emphatically exclaimed—"What with my son Ernest, and your daughter, Narcissus, I am almost plagued out of my reason; and if you do not take your young hussey in hand, I am determined, once for all, to give her up out of my tuition and custody."

"What in the name of heaven has happened now, my dear madam?" asked Narcissus, in a tone of apparent concern and wonder.

"What has happened? Why enough has happened to turn my poor old brain," responded the duchess, and then she began to relate all the circumstances with which the reader is already acquainted, relative to the behaviour of Lady Charlotte Cambray, colouring the

whole according to her taste, and interlarding the narrative with a great deal of new matter with which it is not necessary that the reader should be acquainted, and winding up the whole with a most violent philippic against saucy and disobedient children and grandchildren, and an assertion that she had not suffered so much in the rearing of all her own lawfully begotten sons and daughters (and by the way they had been a little difficult to manage) as she had by this one plaguey girl of Narcissus.

Narcissus listened to the whole very patiently, and then modestly enquired of his mother what she wished him to do. The duchess, in brief, told him that nothing could tame a shrew but castigation, confinement, and fasting; and,

as his daughter certainly had all the qualifications of one of these ladies, he must either sanction such modes of treatment, or take her home and manage her as he would.

This was what Narcissus could not, by any means, consent to; seeing, amongst other objections, that there might be many ladies admitted to high rule and consequence in the manor-house, whose examples and characters did not peculiarly suit for the imitation of a young lady of high rank and expectations such as Lady Charlotte; he therefore, without hesitation, gave his mother full power and authority, under his own hand, (for she would not be satisfied with his bare word,) to use coercive measures, to bring this unmanageable daughter to a due sense of the respect she owed to those

who had been entrusted with the care of her.

When the duchess had gained this point, she was a great deal more composed, and consented to stay and dine with Narcissus, which was always a token that she was well pleased; and after she had taken her meal, she ordered her carriage, and drove homewards, not a little elated with the success of her mission, and vowing that Miss Pert should soon feel the power with which she was vested, and which should be applied with such judicious rigour, as very quickly to produce the most beneficial results.

In the mean time, Narcissus, who began to tire of the sameness of the gay scene around, and had for some weeks wished to get a little out of the troubles

and plagues which seemed to multiply about him, in the heat of the moment, while the wine gave to him a fictitious gaiety, planned and determined upon a journey through the island, to take a little sporting diversion, and to honour some of the principal of his tenantry with his presence at their dwellings, to partake of their hospitality.

There was one tenant in particular, called Hartshorn, who was more than any of the others a favourite with Narcissus; and that perhaps more on account of a comely wife which he possessed, than of any qualifications to command esteem, which belonged to himself. This spouse of Hartshorn had, by some means, contrived to make great progress in the favour of Narcissus, in so much that she had an influence in his mansion, and in the island in general,

which no one else could boast; but as to what she yielded to Narcissus. in return for all this favour and influence, narrators differ very widely, both in assertion and opinion.

It is not necessary here and now to go into all the merits of this matter, seeing that the connection, good or bad, commenced long before the period of this history, and consequently cannot correctly come within the author's cognizance; it is sufficient for his purpose to state the fact of the acquaintance, and to say, that it led to a resolution now to visit the residence of this Hartshorn in the country, with the avowed design of rusticating, for a short time, and sojourning away from the toils and follies of high life.

Mahony, who was always delighted

at the idea of a country ramble, seconded the proposal of Narcissus with such ardour, and descanted so feelingly upon the propriety of recreation after toil, and the necessity of indulging in a little change of this description, to keep the faculties of the mind in good tune and order, that Narcissus felt his rising desire for the journey rapidly grow into a determination to carry it into immediate execution, while the summer shed its beauties around the landscapes of the Fever-isle.

"And when," asked Mahony, "is it the pleasure of your highness that preparation should be made for your journey?" And Mahony looked most anxiously in the face of his master, to catch something like a glimmering of the nature of the reply which was to follow.

Narcissus relapsed into a deep study for some minutes, during which hope, doubt and fear alternately predominated in the bosom of his confident, who hated to see Narcissus serious for a single moment, lest wisdom should by any accident pop into his brain: and he knew full well, that the moment she found a residence there, he must needs surrender the influence he had acquired.

At length his master, raising his eyes from the ground, on which they had involuntarily fallen, looked full in the face of Mahony, and after a short pause, replied, "Why, my boy, we will start next week, as I would fain hope that I shall have a little more leisure now than I have had for some time past. Oh, Mac," (for thus did Narcissus familiarly call his confident when he was in good

humour,) "I have had much toil and trouble lately—great trials of my intellectual strength; and if I had not been endowed with a good portion——"

Mahony knew perfectly well when to throw in a word with effect; and this was one of the opportunities which Narcissus most kindly threw in his way, in order that he might make a suitable response. He made a brief pause after the word "portion," and shook his head very emphatically, while Mahony, without any hesitation or difficulty, gracefully threw in his complimentary fire.

"Yes, Sir," interrupted Mahony, "if you had not been blessed with a superabundant portion of intellectual strength, egad, I don't know what

would have become of the Fever-isle, not I. I fancy we must all have gone down in the general 'wreck of matter,' as Cato says."

Narcissus looked very condescendingly at his flatterer, and smiled most courteously, as if to say, "You are a shrewd, clever, and most useful follower!" And Mahony understood the language of the look, and in a courtier-like manner, made a bow of gratitude in reply.

"Mahony," said Narcissus—"I say, Mahony; come, come nearer; I'll let you into a bit of a secret; but you must be very close; very close indeed, Mac; silent as—as—as—what? Why silent as a dumb waiter! D—-n me, you must not whisper it to yourself in bed."

Then did Mahony make a most pro-

found bow, even to the very ground, and, laying his hand upon his left breast, and lifting his eyes most devoutly to the ceiling of the room (the substitute for heaven) he swore by all that was holy and honourable, that whatever his gracious master entrusted to his keeping, should be kept as close concealed from the knowledge of all the world, as tongue could keep it.

Narcissus upon this drew Mahony very close to him, and, in a half-whisper, asked, if he knew the reason why the Duchess of Whelps was so very much enraged against his brother Ernest, and his new duchess, and why she refused to receive them?

Whereupon Mahony shook his head very eloquently, and lest the shaking should not be understood, added the

simple monosyllable "no!" "Why then I'll tell you," replied Narcissus—"but as you hope for salvation here and hereafter, be mum. You stupid dog, why my brother Cantab was to have had her, to be sure. My mother had made up the match with such pains and labour, for you know Cantab is her favourite, and she could not bear Ernest, and she had written to all her relations on the subject, and it was considered as a done thing, till the young duchess clapped her eyes upon Ernest, and then, whatever he said to her nobody can tell, but somehow or other, the bargain, from that very moment, was completely off. And do you know, Mac, what followed upon this?"

Mahony, of course, answered in the negative, and Narcissus resumed—"Why the duchess wrote a long letter to the

young duchess, and told her what a set of companions Ernest had, wenches and wild chaps, and advised her, as she valued her own peace of mind and happiness, not to have any thing to say to him; and she threw out a hint or two also about her fickleness in first chusing to have Cantab, and then changing to Ernest; and told her this was what was usually called coquetry, or something like it, and God forgive her if she judged harshly, but she never thought well of those who were guilty of it; and as for her marrying Ernest, if she was bent upon such a wild-goose scheme, she thought it nothing more than right to tell her that she never would consent to any such thing; and if this marriage did take place, she would never countenance it, nor receive them at her mansion, they might depend on it."

At this part of the recital, Mahony held up his hands with much appearance of wonder, and exclaimed—"Then the duchess would have been willing that Duke Cantab should have had the lady, provided there had been no alteration in her opinion of him."

"Exactly so," returned Narcissus—"and sorely has it galled the old lady that her interdiction produced so little effect; and a devil of an outcry has she made about it, writing letters to all the world, and finding terrible fault both with Ernest and the duchess. For me, although she has tried hard to bring me into the quarrel, I have hitherto contrived to keep myself pretty clear; for I see no necessity for kicking up such a dust about it. If they like each other, why in God's name should they be separated?"

"Your highness always judges liberally and benevolently," exclaimed Mahony—"but few are so generous and enlightened as you are. I perfectly agree in your highness's opinion, and think the duke and duchess ought most assuredly to be forgiven—if you think so."

The saving "if" was of great benefit to Mahony in this instance, for Narcissus had begun to think his confident had hazarded an opinion rather too boldly, and was preparing to give him a check, when the humble "if" stepped in, and arrested the progress of the censure. The countenance of Narcissus instantly relaxed, and in lieu of the angry frown, good humour took its station and reigned supreme. "You must mind, Mac, and be mum," whispered he very graciously, putting his finger to

his mouth, to make his meaning more intelligible.

Mahony put his finger to his mouth at the same time, by way of making a reply equally intelligible and emphatic, and then laid his hand on his heart, and called heaven to deal so to him as he kept the secret. On which Narcissus expressed himself fully satisfied, and the happy pair separated, the one to seek amusement in the charms of beauty and the bottle, and the other to indulge in a little self-gratulation on the improvement he had made in his master's favour.

CHAP. IX.

Domestic dalliance—Unexpected and unwelcome intrusion—Consternation—A private interview and a quarrel—The terrors of a great man—The valour of a greater—Arguments against honour—A challenge—More fears, and a little increase of manliness.

ABOUT a month had elapsed since the affair of the riot in the streets of Tzell; and the little domestic disturbance which, in consequence of that circumstance, had taken place, had pretty well subsided, when the packet from Narcissus, containing the letter of introduction from the Duchess of Whelps, arrived. It had been tossed for some weeks upon the ocean, and the bearer of

it, at one time, was under no inconsiderable apprehensions, as well for his own personal safety, as that of his charge. The gale, however, had at length subsided, and the wonderful packet was placed in the hands of the eager duke.

"Now, Ernest," said the duchess, "now for the fulfilment of your scheme. We have nicked the old duchess—completely bamboozled her into a consent to our plan; and we have nothing to do but to invent journies of pleasure, sure as we are of universal respect. E[illegible] Ernest, I have heard something about your fondness for the girls, and another sort of *penchant* which you have, and which is still more odious to me; let me beg, that I may have no ground for suspicions of your fidelity to me. Don't go about poaching wherever we stay."

The duke, on this, to do away with the apprehensions of his wife, began most solemnly to swear that he had now no wish on earth ungratified; that he considered himself the most happy of all men, since he had obtained his dear duchess, and had never once felt the slightest inclination to go astray from his duty; and he was confident that, for the future, he could pledge himself to the same line of conduct, without the least hesitation. As he concluded his promise, the duke gently leaned forward, and in a tone of unparaleled affection, entreated his wife to give him credit for the truth of his declarations, swearing that she was to him more beautiful and bewitching than the fabled houris of Mahomet.

Her highness found it impossible to resist such a violent attack from the ar-

tillery of love; and to shew her gratitude for the eloquent tenderness of her spouse, she most readily bent forward to meet his embrace, when at this critical moment of mutual happiness, when each was little dreaming of any thing in the shape of interruption, the door suddenly flew open, and Duke Cantab stood before them.

Words would be totally inadequate to figure the confusion of the duke and duchess at this most unexpected intrusion. They started back from each other's arms, and both rising from their seats at the same moment, began to stammer an almost unintelligible apology, and to talk most incoherently about the suddenness of the pleasure, and their own unpreparedness to receive their fraternal visitor.

This confusion of the astonished pair may be attributed to some other cause than their situation at the instant of Duke Cantab's appearance; and if the reader will call to mind the particulars of the secret which Narcissus, in a fit of extraordinary good humour, related to Mahony, he will, doubtless, without much trouble, be enabled to fathom the principal source of the blushing, and stammering, and hesitating, and so forth, which took place on this occasion. Duke Cantab had certainly possessed a prior claim to the hand of the fair duchess; and, in truth, matters had gone so far, that all the arrangements between their two families had been nearly brought to a conclusion, when Duke Ernest, unfortunately for the regularity of the proceeding, suddenly stepped in, and, by means of his attract-

iveness of person, and the winning volubility of his tongue, put his brother Cantab completely aside, and, in a most uncavalierly manner, popped himself into his room.

It may easily be conjectured, therefore, that the visit of the injured brother was very far from pleasing, either to Duke Ernest or his duchess. The former could not refrain from calling to mind the unbrotherly manner in which he had frustrated his views of domestic felicity; while the latter, feeling that she had in truth jilted her former admirer, after going to almost all possible lengths with him, could not for the soul of her, muster up courage to look him in the face, or to bid her hypocritical tongue pronounce him welcome to her residence.

Cantab himself, however, who had none of these sensations and recollections of a self-accusing nature, to restrain him from introducing himself, made his bow with the utmost *sang froid*, and without hesitation, twirling his cane about in his left hand, and assuming the most easy and careless tone of voice imaginable, exclaimed—"Ah, your highnesses, I am rejoiced to see you. Come, come, don't look blue, madam, I have determined to adopt the old maxim, to forget and forgive, as far as regards yourself. With my good brother, however, I must have a few words in private, and if it will not be taking too great a liberty with your highness, I would ask the opportunity."

The duchess, rejoiced at the means being offered her of escaping without more ado; from the presence of one she had

certainly so much injured, replied faintly in the affirmative, and instantly made the best of her way to the door of the apartment, in spite of the exclamations of her husband, who vainly reiterated—"My love, you know I have no secrets. I desire you will remain here and hear it all."

Truth to tell, the Duke felt himself very uneasy the moment his brother Cantab had made the request for a private interview; for he knew the latter to be of a most fiery and determined temper, and doubted not, for a moment, that he was about to demand satisfaction, or, in other words, to compel him to stand fire; and, as he was nothing of a fighting man; and had not an atom of the hero in his composition, he would fain have compromised the matter, and made any sacrifice in the world to avoid the danger of such an occurrence. The

duchess, however, had completely disappeared, and it was therefore necessary that he should meet the issue as well as he was able.

" Brother," said Duke Cantab, as soon as he had closed the door, and drawn a chair close to that of Duke Ernest—" Brother, although you have had but little consideration for the name, I am come for an explanation of your conduct in wresting from me the female on whom I had purposed to bestow my hand. You have assailed my happiness, and now I come to seek the only remaining compensation."

" Compensation! Compensation!" cried Duke Ernest, echoing the last words of his brother's exclamation. " Yes, yes, brother Cantab, I feel that I was not—that is, that I did not—that

s—I could not—command myself—being struck—that is, smitten by the charms of—of—of—My dear Brother—I am truly ashamed—that is, concerned—and by way of compensation, as you have been so kind as to mention the word, I am very willing to make the utmost in my power, which you know is but weak—therefore you have only to name the sum."

"Sum!" echoed Cantab—"Are you mad, Ernest? Do you think money can ever compensate for the treasure of which you have robbed me?—Can money restore me to happiness?—Can money heal the wounds of honour?—Can money—d—n me, can money make me——?"

"For God's sake, my dear Cantab," cried Duke Ernest in terrible agitation;

"don't put yourself in a passion. Pray let us talk over this business coolly, and I am sure you will find me very reasonable, and ready to do every thing you can wish from a brother—don't be in a passion!"

"Talk of coolness to a man who is broiling on a gridiron," exclaimed Cantab. "Talk of coolness to the devil; but don't talk of coolness to me. How can I be cool: didn't you step in meanly, just as I was going to carry off the prize? and didn't you cheat me out of my hopes?

"Oh yes, I did, indeed;" cried Duke Ernest, trembling most violently from head to foot, for he began to fear that he was in very imminent danger, and determined to try the effect of a few soothing words—"I did—I did; and I am ready

to confess that I was wrong, very wrong; and I will make you any apology in the world, brother; and I am sure you will not be so unreasonable as to ask any thing beyond."

"But I will be unreasonable, as you was, Ernest;" vociferated Cantab. "I will have vengeance. I am determined to quench my rancour in blood. I will have something beyond apology. Will apology be any atonement? No, no; you shall meet me as a man of honour."

At these words Duke Ernest turned deadly pale. His hopes of escape all took flight together. His spirits sunk suddenly, like the mercury in a barometer at the approach of a dreadful storm: his hair rose on end; pistols and bullets, and coffins and so forth, a long and hideous train of ghostly images

flitted before his mind's eye, and he would have given his dukedom, and his duchess to boot, to have got clear out of the scrape, without any injury. But perhaps, after all, this timidity might not be the effect of cowardice, or any fear of death, but the horror which accompanied the idea of meeting a brother on such a gloomy business; and as Duke Ernest had commenced reforming himself under the instructions of his wife, he might have acquired a few lessons of a religious nature, and have newly gained some useful information towards preventing the stings of conscience. Whatever might be the cause, the effect was the same: there was a most palpable convulsion of the whole system of Duke Ernest, which prevented him from making use of his tongue to give an audible reply to his brother.

Duke Cantab, however, had no scruples of conscience whatsoever. He had come hither for the avowed purpose of avenging himself upon Ernest, and he was determined not to be diverted from his object. He accordingly raised his tone of voice, and in a most peremptory manner, demanded the cause of his brother's hesitation, adding—"have you carried off my Helen, and like Paris do you want courage to retain her?"

"Retain her!" exclaimed Duke Ernest, deriving a ray of hope from the idea that his brother after all only wanted the duchess.—"Why, brother, as I have been so criminal—that is, so cruel to you, would it restore you to good humour and happiness if I were to give her up to you?"

Duke Cantab surveyed his brother for

a few minutes in silent wonder and indignation; at length the latter found words —"Is it possible," said he, "that you can make such a debasing preposal; or was the hint only thrown out as a lure? No, no; I am not to be thus taken in. If I take the duchess, my brave brother, I shall first of all do her the justice to put you out of the way. I am determined to have satisfaction; I have written on this card the hour and the place where I shall be ready to receive you, and this I leave for your digestion. But mark me, Ernest, if you fail to come at the time appointed, in every street and town of Handover will I post you as a coward—mind that."

"But is it not possible," asked Ernest, calling his courage to his aid to address Duke Cantab, before he could get out of the room; "is it not possible to com-

promise this matter ?—you know I do not love these extremities. Might we not explain matters in a friendly way ? I am perfectly ready to make a public apology, any thing you will be pleased to dictate, rather than endanger my brother's safety for such a trifle."

"Endanger my safety!" retorted Duke Cantab—"Did you hesitate to take away my happiness, which to all men, is more precious than life ?"

"I beg your pardon there, brother," interrupted Duke Ernest. "I think nothing in human nature is to be compared with life ; and I am ready and willing to surrender all my happiness at your desire, rather than to put your existence in any thing like hazard."

"I'll have no parleying, Ernest,"

returned Cantab—" It is a subject which will not bear it. You have stolen my intended wife; and it is my determination to make her a widow by to-morrow night, or to leave you in the possession of her without further molestation from me. Look to the card, Ernest, and remember I shall be punctual; and so must you, if you would escape the obloquy which will otherwise await you, and which, after all, may avail but very little to prevent me from pursuing my vengeance in a more summary way."

As he said these words, Duke Cantab, without deigning another look at his brother, violently opened the door, and departed from the house, while the duchess, who, from an adjoining apartment, had heard the whole of the conversation, and was not a little delighted

at the thought of having a duel fought on her account, entered at the opposite door, while the duke hastily shuffled the fatal card into his pocket to avoid her notice.

The duchess approached the table, and surveyed it very minutely, from one end to the other, then turned over the papers which lay scattered about it, making every now and then an exclamation of surprize, while her astonished and alarmed spouse silently surveyed all her movements. At length she suddenly stopped short in her search, and looking her husband full in the face, cried, "What have you done with the card?"

A stroke of lightning could not have struck the duke more powerfully than did this simple question, "What have you done with the card?" He

looked and coloured deeply, fumbled over some of the papers, as if seeking it, and at length, with a deep sigh, and a voice scarcely articulate, replied, "I don't know—The card—card—what card, my dear duchess? Card—card—card—I don't recollect what card."

"Oh, don't you," replied the duchess, "then I'll tell you; the card which contains the time and place, you understand me, eh, Ernest? Now is your time to shew your affection for me. You must go boldly, fire at three paces distance, and you will establish your own character, and vindicate my honour. Come, come, you must look manly. Let's have no more shivering, but give me the card."

It was evident that she had heard all. There was consequently no hope for the

duke whatever. With evident reluctance, therefore, he drew out the obnoxious card, and without daring to suffer his own eyes to rest upon it for an instant; handed it to the anxious duchess, who instantly and aloud in a firm voice, read, "Behind the Hotel *Des Etrangers* to-morrow morning, half an hour before sun-rise."

The duke gave a loud and deep groan, as he heard the fatal words, and falteringly declared, "that he could not reconcile himself to the horrid idea of meeting a brother in cool blood for the purpose of committing murder;" adding, "my love, don't you think I must stay at home?"

"At home you may stay, but not with me!" cried the enraged duchess—"What, refuse an honourable meeting!

Oh, base wretch, unworthy of the name of man, how much is your brother to be preferred? Fool that I was not to have seen his merits until this moment."

The duke in vain attempted to persuade her that it was the crime which alarmed, not any personal fears; but the duchess plied her anger in such a volley of words accompanied by tears, that his highness was finally compelled to yield his reluctant consent to preserve the appointment, although he inwardly vowed rather to submit to the most humiliating terms, than run the imminent hazard he was compelled to meet, and even were it needful, to prevent fatal risk, he resolved to throw away his weapon, and refuse to enter into the contest. The duchess, however, who was a pretty keen observer of her husband, read his waverings in his coun-

tenando, and plied him during the day with so many reproaches of his want of courage, that before the time of retiring to rest, he had determined within himself at least to wear the appearance of intrepidity.

END OF VOLUME I.

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